

**RUSSIAN POPULISM AND ITS RELATIONS WITH  
ANARCHISM 1870-1881**

by

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## **Synopsis**

This thesis studies Russian revolutionary populism as it developed in the 1870s in the context of the contemporary European socialist movement, and in particular the anarchist movement. It is contended that previous historiography has tended to study Russian populism in isolation from the broader socialist movement in Europe, and that populism has been inaccurately portrayed as undergoing a linear development from peaceful propaganda towards terror and regicide. To correct these imbalances, the thesis examines three individuals who were involved in both the anarchist movement in Europe and the populist movement in Russia in the 1870s, these being Mikhail Bakunin, Zemfirii Ralli and Petr Kropotkin. Alongside these chapters are studies of groups or movements closely connected with these individuals. Central themes include those of constituency, organisation, tactics, the relationship of revolutionaries to the people, the concepts of political and social revolution, gender and the tension between emancipation and revolution, and the rise of terrorism. In examining the debates and tensions within Russian populism, it is demonstrated that the Russian revolutionary movement of the 1870s did not undergo a linear development, but contained various competing tendencies and ideas; and in comparing these debates with those within anarchism, the conclusion is reached that populism should be seen not as peculiarly Russian, but as a part of the European revolutionary movement.



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## Introduction

### 1: Structure, Content and Aims

The overarching aim of this thesis will be to study Russian revolutionary populism as it developed in the 1870s in the context of the contemporary socialist movement in Europe, and in particular the anarchist movement with which, as I intend to demonstrate, populism shared many ideals, ideologies, tactics and internal disputes. As noted below, in both Soviet and Western historiography, Russian populism has been studied more or less in isolation from the broader socialist movement in Europe; although the influence of ideas from abroad has been noted by historians, populism has been treated as a separate, home-grown affair. The aim of this thesis is to correct this misconception and to show that in fact, although it undoubtedly possessed characteristics peculiar to Russia, the populist movement should be understood as part of the Europe-wide revolutionary socialist movement.

To accomplish this aim, the thesis will be structured around chapters discussing three individuals who were involved in both the anarchist movement in Europe, and the populist movement in Russia in the 1870s, these three being Mikhail Bakunin, Zemfirii Ralli and Petr Kropotkin. Around these chapters will be studies of groups or movements closely connected with the individual concerned and their activities in Russia or in Europe as appropriate. In this way I hope to be able to study populism and anarchism on an ideological as well as practical level for the purposes of both a comparative study and a study of the mutual influences of each movement on the other.

A number of important issues will be highlighted in the course of the study. The theme of constituency will be addressed for both movements, i.e. to which section or sections of society populists and anarchists looked to accomplish the revolution; the organisational forms embraced by anarchists and populists; the tactics to be used both to attempt to rouse their constituencies to action and, on a larger scale, how they proposed to organise and achieve the revolution; the relationship of the revolutionaries to the masses, both in theory and in practice; the differing concepts of political and

social revolution, and the theories which lay behind them; the issue of gender, and the tension between feminism/women's emancipation and revolution; and the rise of terrorism in Russia and Europe.

### 1-1: Introduction

The introductory section is intended to provide a background to the thesis firstly by discussing the historiography of populism in the West and the Soviet Union, and secondly by describing the development of anarchism and Russian socialism up to the end of the 1860s. I shall use largely secondary literature to outline the development of the anarchist movement in Europe, referring to Proudhon's mutualism and federalism, and Bakunin's collectivism in particular. The constituencies which the anarchists tried to address will be discussed, in particular the role ascribed to the peasants, for the purpose of comparison to populist ideas on the subject. Reference will also be made to Marx's view of the peasants and the different role ascribed them by the Social Democrats. The International Workingmen's Association will be discussed, and the place of anarchism within it, with the aim of outlining the disputes over organisational issues, federalism/centralism, the anarchist critique of statism and involvement in politics, the role of the intelligentsia, and the arguments which led to the split in the International in 1872 and the founding of the anti-authoritarian International thereafter.

The next section will look at the socialist movement in Russia to the end of the 1860s to provide a background to the populism of the 1870s. Basing myself mostly on secondary literature, I shall discuss the ideological influences on Russian socialism, native and foreign. Other influences will be referred to such as the Polish rising and the repression of the student movement, which discouraged hopes for liberal reform. The emergence of the underground revolutionary groups - *Zemlya i volya*, *Organizatsiya*, *Young Russia* - and Karakozov's attempt on the life of the Tsar will illustrate the emerging tactical and organisational divisions creating the two main strands of populism by the end of the decade, propagandism and Jacobinism.



## 1-2: Chapter 1: Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin

The purpose of this chapter will be to study in greater depth the ideas of Bakunin and his influence on both the anarchist and populist movements in the 1870s.

The first part of the chapter will be a biographical study, largely narrative, and focusing on Bakunin's early writings, his apparent Slavism of the late 1840s, and his involvement with the Polish liberation cause. The Prague congress and risings in Eastern Europe, and the question of why he looked particularly to Eastern Europe for revolution will be discussed. The Bakunin of the 1860s and early 1870s will be examined, with the maturing of his anarchist views, and in particular his involvement in the International, his secret Alliance, and his arguments with Marx. Obviously care will be taken here not to go over ground covered in the Introduction; this section however is envisaged as a detailed examination of ideas outlined in the Introduction.

The second section will deal with Bakunin's writings on Russia and his attempts to influence the revolutionary movement there. His involvement with Nechaev, his dispute with Lavrov and its influence on the revolutionary movement in Russia, his attitudes to the Paris Commune of 1871, and his theory of a reactionary alliance of Germany and Russia against social revolution will be discussed. The increasing contact with the movement in Russia, and the growing influence of anarchism on the Russian movement will be addressed, leading up to the ideas behind, and influence of, his book "Statism and Anarchy". The final section of this chapter will deal with Bakunin's theoretical and organisational ideas, as well as his views on the roles of various social classes in the social revolution. Organisation and tactics of the revolutionary movement, federalism, anti-statism, refusal to use "political" methods, arguments with both Marx and Lavrov, and the insistence on a spontaneous, economically based popular movement to bring about the revolution invite comparison with the ideas and disputes in populism, as does Bakunin's preferred revolutionary tactic of popular insurrection.

### 1-3: Chapter 2: The Chaikovskii Circle

In the first part of this chapter I shall be focusing on the origins of the Chaikovskii Circle in St. Petersburg against the background of the student movement of the late 1860s and the Nechaev affair. Major issues in this section include the congress held in 1871 at which the direction of the revolutionary movement was discussed, the debate on constitutionalism and the *Chaikovtsy's* break with it, and the beginning of their contact with the workers of the capital and elsewhere. I shall discuss the distinction made in much of the memoir literature between the *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* workers, as well as related issues of constituency and the idea of the "popular propagandist". I shall also look at the development of provincial groups.

The second section will deal with the influence of the émigrés and events abroad such as the growth of the International and the impact of the Paris Commune. Of particular interest is the Bakunin/Lavrov debate, and the competing influences of Bakunin's insurrectionism and Lavrov's programme of careful preparation. The reception of both Lavrov's "*Vpered!*" and Bakunin's "*Gosudarstvennost' i anarkhiya*" will be discussed, referring particularly to their differing ideas of the role of the intelligentsia, and revolutionary tactics. The idea of a journal published abroad raised more sharply the question of which of the émigré groups to form links with. I will make an examination of the Lavrovist programme and hope to clarify the ideological direction of the Chaikovskii circle by comparing it with Bakunin's ideas discussed in Chapter 1. Kropotkin's manifesto will be discussed in detail, along with the debates surrounding it. Finally the collapse of the Chaikovskii circle and the arrests of its members will be described.

### 1-4: Chapter 3: Anarchist Émigrés: Z.K. Ralli and the Geneva "Young Bakuninists"

The second of the "character studies" of the thesis will look at Z. Ralli as a representative of "anarcho-populism". The first section of the chapter will provide a biographical description of his early life and involvement in the Russian revolutionary movement. His emigration to Switzerland, contact with

the International and Bakunin and his conversion to anarchism, and subsequent founding of the Russian Brotherhood to try and spread anarchism to Russia will be outlined, as will the sensation caused by the arrest of Nechaev, and finally the split with Bakunin.

The second part of this chapter will deal with Ralli's propaganda and more formal contacts between his group and the Russian movement. The constituency and focus of the propaganda is of particular interest, as is the merging of ideas of populism and anarchism, reflecting the mutual influence which is central to the thesis. The founding of *Rabotnik* and the formation of links with the Pan-Russian Social Revolutionary Organisation will be discussed, and I intend to look in some detail at the content of *Rabotnik*, in particular at its attempts to give an international dimension to the Russian movement and inform Russian workers about the existence and activities of the International. Ralli's book *Sytye i golodnye* will also be examined in a similar light, addressing the problems of peasant religion and popular monarchism in propaganda, and the role of the revolutionary intelligentsia, and Ralli's interpretation of the movement to the people. Finally, I will look at the later journal *Obshchina* and its assessment of the movement to the people, of the assassination attempts in Europe and the idea of propaganda by deed, as well as its attempts to unite the divided Russian émigrés.

#### 1-5: Chapter 4: The Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation and the Populism of the mid-1870s

The first section will discuss the origins of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation (PRSRO) in the collaboration of Georgian revolutionaries and the so-called Fritschi group of women in Switzerland, against the background of the arrests in Russia and the demise of the Chaikovtsy in 1874, and of the Russian colony in Zurich. Connections with the émigrés and the decision to collaborate with the "Young Bakuninists" will be outlined. The main issues to be examined in this section include the decision of the Georgians to reject the cause of the liberation of the Caucasian nations from Russia and a federal Caucasian republic in favour of joining the Russian

revolutionaries to work for social revolution across the whole empire. Additionally the gender issue will be examined, along with questions of why the women revolutionaries abandoned the cause of emancipation for revolution, and the influences on their decision to leave their studies to go to the people.

The group's activities on their return to Russia to work among the people bring us back to some of the central themes of the thesis. The choice of constituency is particularly relevant, as this group consciously chose to work above all in the *fabriki* of Moscow. The division, or perceived division, between *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* workers is thus raised, as is the question of the peasants. The group's propaganda material will be discussed in this regard, in particular that which they received through their collaboration with Ralli in Switzerland. I shall discuss the organisation and regulation of the PRSRO, discussing the trend towards more ideological homogeneity and formal organisation. Finally the methods of struggle advocated by this group will be discussed, and the insistence that all forms of struggle be of a "social" rather than "political" nature. The next section will deal with the fall of the PRSRO and its causes, and the speeches made at the "Trial of the Fifty" will be examined. Finally, to contextualise the group within the movement in Russia, I intend to examine some of the other groups which were in existence at the same time, in particular E. Zaslavskii's South Russian Union of Workers.

#### 1-6: Chapter 5: The Russian Movement in the Late 1870s

The first part of this chapter will discuss the strength in South Russia and Ukraine of the *buntari*, in the mid- to late 1870s, and the preference for practical action as opposed to study or propaganda work. The organisations and activities of the likes of Vladimir Debagorii-Mokrievich, Lev Deich, Vera Zasulich and Yakov Stefanovich will be examined, and the spirit of violence and the use of arms which was growing in the south in contrast to the movement in the north, especially the intention of armed action as self-defence as opposed to political terror. Their idea of using peasant monarchism to revolutionary effect by composing false manifestos from the Tsar, and the Chigirin conspiracy, will be examined. The emergence of *Zemlya i volya* in 1876 will be discussed in this

section, along with their programme and their tactics; from agrarian terror to joining villages as doctors or teachers, and finally the drift back to the towns and growing centralisation of the organisation.

The second part will outline the growth of a “political” movement among Russian revolutionaries; I intend to discuss such issues as the politicisation of society in the late 1870s, increasing contact between revolutionaries and liberals, and the closely related issue of the Balkan war. The beginning of a terrorist movement and the duel with the state will be examined here. I will try to unravel the confusing strands of tactics, ideologies and debates within *Zemlya i volya*; attitudes to terror, political struggle, mass movements and social revolution and economic terror. This leads on to the issues which in 1879 brought about a split in the organisation and the formation of *Narodnaya volya* and *Chernyi peredel*.

The next section will examine the programmes, tactics and aims of *Chernyi peredel*, *Narodnaya volya* and the later South Russian Workers’ Union. The themes of organisational forms, tactics and constituencies are of importance here as elsewhere. Issues of popular organisation, federalism, social and economic revolution of the *Chernyi peredel* wing of the movement will be contrasted with *Narodnaya volya*’s tactics, organisational forms, constituency, and aims; centralism, party discipline, terrorism, and political change.

#### 1-7: Chapter 6: Kropotkin and European Anarchism in the Late 1870s

The first part of this final chapter will be dedicated to a biographical study of Kropotkin, cross-referenced where appropriate to the chapter on the Chaikovskii circle. Issues relevant to the thesis are Kropotkin’s contact with the International, his commitment to revolutionary means and his disappointment with the “political” wing of the International and preference for the federalist anti-politics of the Jura Federation and consequent conversion to anarchism. Kropotkin’s work with the *Chaikovtsy* will be looked into, taking care to avoid repetition from Chapter 2, looking at his position on the tactical and ideological

debates within the circle as it moved from self-education to propaganda among the intelligentsia to agitation among workers.

The second section will deal with the anarchist movement in Europe, which Kropotkin joined on his escape from Russia. Issues will include the agitation against parliamentarism, the debate over politics and revolutionary tactics. The central theme in this section however will be the rise of propaganda by deed and the changing interpretations of this idea. Firstly I shall outline its growth from the insurrectionist tactics of the early 1870s, from Bakunin through the organisations in Spain and Italy, and the debates surrounding the competing tactics of insurrection and strikes, which in turn is linked to issues of constituency. I also intend to examine the rise of anarchist communism and its connection, if any, with the idea of propaganda by deed.

The third part of this chapter concerns the rise of terror in anarchism; I will begin by looking at the subtle change in interpretation of propaganda by deed by Paul Brousse, compared to Kropotkin's ideas on the subject. I shall refer to articles in the anarchist press to show the differing views on what propaganda by deed meant. Also important are Kropotkin's and others' views on individual and small-group actions, referring to the movements in Europe and Russia. I hope to demonstrate both the growing influence of Russian terrorism on the anarchists and the parallel nature of the debates going on in both movements. The growth of "amorphousness" (independent cells with no central organisation) in anarchism will be examined in relation to the growing interpretation of propaganda by deed as terrorism rather than insurrection. I shall also examine the influence of *Narodnaya volya*, or more precisely, the anarchists' perception of *Narodnaya volya*, on anarchist tactics and organisational methods.

Finally in this chapter I intend to look at the anarchists' conference of 1881 to sum up the debates in the anarchist movement, based on the conspectuses published by M. Nettlau and in *Le Révolté*; mass movement vs. small cells, agitation and insurrection vs. bombs, Malatesta's idea of an organisation to fight the state directly, and the debate on morality. This will

invite comparison with contemporaneous debates in the Russian revolutionary movement.

### 1-8: Conclusion

The conclusion will draw together the themes and issues involved in, and comparisons and connections between, anarchism and populism and the influences of each on the other. Debates on constituencies, *fabrichnye/zavodskie*, reasons for targeting the peasants, organisational issues-centralism/federalism, relations of the revolutionaries to the masses, tactics-propaganda, action, insurrection, propaganda by deed, terrorism, political/social revolution, attitudes to politics in general will be discussed. I shall also discuss gender issues such as why women joined the revolutionary movement in Russia, and how this compares to Europe, debates over emancipation/revolution, and the lack of response from, or effort directed to, women workers. The overall theme connecting these issues, and thus the main idea of the thesis, will be the particularism or universalism of anarchism and populism, and whether their mutual influences suggest that populism should be seen not as peculiarly Russian but more as a part of the European revolutionary movement.

## **2: Historiography and Sources**

### 2-1: Soviet Historiography of the Populist Movement

Much of the Soviet historiography of the populist movement was written by a fairly small number of historians during the 1960s, and in consulting the literature one can determine a definite Soviet "line" on the populist movement. As well as numerous articles and monographs, collections of documents began to be published from the late 1950s.<sup>1</sup> This flurry of activity came after a lengthy

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<sup>1</sup> Historiography includes: *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii* Moscow 1965; V.F. Antonov *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* Moscow 1965; P.S. Tkachenko, *Revolutsionnaya narodnicheskaya organizatsiya "Zemlya i volya"* Moscow 1961; R.V. Filippov, *Ideologiya Bol'shogo obshchestva propagandy* Petrozavodsk 1963; R.V. Filippov *Iz istorii narodnicheskogo dvizheniya na pervom etape "khozhdeniya v narod"* Petrozavodsk 1967. Collections of populist literature published at this time include: *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov XIX veka* Moscow 1964; *Narodnicheskaya ekonomicheskaya literatura* Moscow 1958; *Agitatsionnaya literatura russkikh revolyutsionnykh narodnikov* Leningrad 1970. Some of the extensive memoir literature was also reprinted, Kropotkin's *Zapiski revolyutsionera* Moscow

silence on the subject of populism. Lenin had had much to say on the subject (and his works form a large part of the footnotes of later Soviet historians) and a large number of useful articles and memoirs were published during the 1920s, particularly in the journal *Katorga i ssylka*. Discussion was ended by Stalin; *Katorga i ssylka* and the Society of Political Prisoners and Exiles which published it were closed down in 1935. Connecting interest in populism with terrorism, and thus with the Kirov murder, Stalin reportedly said "If we teach people about *Narodnaya volya* we shall raise terrorists."<sup>2</sup> Populism was dropped from serious study and dismissed as non-revolutionary and utopian. After the Twentieth Party Congress, work began to appear again in journals such as *Istoricheskie zapiski*, *Kommunist* and *Istoriya SSSR*.

In Soviet historiography the populist movement of the 1870s is seen as a revolutionary-democratic movement, and the "*raznochintsy*" stage of the liberation movement in Russia.<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking the historical-sociological schema into which the populist movement fits is one of a revolutionary/liberation movement working its way down the classes as Russia moves from feudalism to capitalism. Thus the movement begins as nobles' liberalism, passes through *raznochintsy* democratism and finally reaches proletarian communism.<sup>4</sup> This schema allowed the populist movement to be assessed positively as a precursor to Bolshevism rather than as inimical to it, (which better accords to Lenin's and Marx's views); and it also allowed the CPSU to attach itself to a revolutionary tradition stretching back to the Decembrists. As R.V. Filippov points out, this is in contrast to the Stalinist historical schema, which posited proletarian-democratic and populist-utopian movements as separate and opposed; the negative assessment in the 1938 "short course" History of the VKP(b) was that the populists prevented workers from understanding their role in historical development and inhibited the growth

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1966; Stepnyak-Kravchinskii's *Podpol'naya Rossiya* Moscow 1960; and Vera Figner's *Zapechatlennyi trud* Moscow 1964 for example.

<sup>2</sup> S.S. Volk *Narodnaya volya* Moscow/Leningrad 1966 p.25

<sup>3</sup> *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii* Moscow 1965 preface

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Mike Pushkin for pointing out that this schema corresponds to that set out by Lenin in his article "Tri pokoleniya, tri klassa, deistvovavshie v osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii"



of an independent working-class party.<sup>5</sup> The new positive interpretation looked to the start and assistance the populists gave to the workers' movement, despite their mistaken interpretations of, for example, Marx, the Paris Commune, and the International.<sup>6</sup>

In Soviet historiography the populists were, objectively speaking, bourgeois democrats, and only socialist in their subjective efforts to raise the peasants to revolutionary struggle.<sup>7</sup> They were radicals in the Western historical sense of the word;<sup>8</sup> their theories were progressive *for their time* but essentially not revolutionary; their heroic struggle was however not in vain as they paved the way for the further revolutionary development of the Russian people on the difficult road to Marx and Engels.<sup>9</sup>

What then were the bases for the Soviet historians' categorisation of the populists as objectively bourgeois democrats in spite of their declared socialist aims? The key word is "objectively"; the socialism of the revolutionaries of the 1870s was utopian and subjective; Russia had yet to discover "scientific" socialism. Soviet historians looked to the role the populists played in the unfolding of the historical process and the class basis of their ideology to arrive at their "objective" analysis. Pokrovskii in the 1920s put forward the idea of populism expressing the interests of the intelligentsia as a class;<sup>10</sup> this was accepted neither by Stalinist nor post-Stalin historians, for whom the intelligentsia constituted a social group (*sloi* or *prosloika*) but not a class. According to M. Kheifets, the populists were the direct descendants of the democrats of the 1860s and essentially expressed the interests of the petty

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<sup>5</sup> R.V. Filippov "Sootnoshenie revolyutsionno-narodnicheskogo i rabocheho dvizheniya v Rossii v 70kh godov XIX v." in *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii* p. 213

<sup>6</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" p.214

<sup>7</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" p.211; V.F. Antonov *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* Moscow 1965 p.139

<sup>8</sup> P.S. Tkachenko *Revolutsionnaya narodnicheskaya organizatsiya "Zemlya i volya"* Moscow 1961 p.6

<sup>9</sup> R.V. Filippov *Ideologiya Bol'shogo obshchestva propagandy* Petrozavodsk 1963 p.5

<sup>10</sup> Tkachenko *Revolutsionnaya* p.26. The idea of the intelligentsia as a class with a class ideology has been used by some Marxists with regard to Bolshevism, and by anarchists with regard to Marxism generally. See, e.g., G. Konrad/I. Szeleny *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* Brighton 1979; R. Gombin *The Radical Tradition* London 1978; M. Bakunin, *A Criticism of State Socialism* Melbourne 1975.

bourgeoisie. Populism was the ideological clothing in which they dressed the peasants' struggle for land; but they were mistaken in thinking that the peasants were socialist.<sup>11</sup> Behind the peasants' hatred of the *pomeshchik* and their elemental revolutionism lay the desire for private property. O.V. Aptekman's memoir account of propaganda in the *narod* is cited; a peasant said to him, "When we share out the land, I'll take on two workers and I'll be in a fine position!"<sup>12</sup> The struggle of the small producer against the remains of feudalism in Russia was broadened by the populists into a fight for the freedom of intellectual and political development.<sup>13</sup> So the populists, with their socialist phrases and dreams, were objectively fighting for bourgeois democracy. In comparison with the liberals, who looked for reform from above, the populists were effectively fighting for capitalism on the American, as opposed to the Prussian, model, despite their professed opposition to capitalism in general.<sup>14</sup>

In the Marxist schema of historical development it was necessary for Russia to pass through a phase of capitalist development and bourgeois democracy to prepare the economic and social conditions for socialism. Therefore the populists of the 1870s, in objectively expressing the interests of the small producer, attacking the remnants of feudalism and attempting to raise the political consciousness of the lower classes, can be seen by Soviet historians as a progressive force in Russian history. They belong to the same revolutionary tradition which gave rise to Social Democracy when capitalism was fully established in Russia; the populists' confused blend of objective bourgeois democracy and subjective revolutionary socialism was a product of a transitional phase in Russia's development, combining elements of dying feudalism and nascent capitalism.<sup>15</sup> Their militant democratism, hatred of Tsarism and the *pomeshchiki*, desire to win freedom and land for the people

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<sup>11</sup> M.I. Kheifets *Vtoraya revolyutsionnaya situatsiya v Rossii* Moscow 1963 p.60

<sup>12</sup> V.G. Bazanov (ed.) *Agitatsionnaya literatura russkikh revolyutsionnykh narodnikov* Leningrad 1970 p.49

<sup>13</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" p.215

<sup>14</sup> R.V. Filippov *Iz istorii narodnicheskogo dvizheniya na pervom etape "khozheniya v narod"* Petrozavodsk 1967 p.15

<sup>15</sup> Filippov *Ideologiya* p.107

and violently overthrow the monarchy, their turn to the masses and their opposition to liberalism allowed Soviet Marxists to see the populists of the 1870s as their predecessors.<sup>16</sup>

The populists' lack of understanding of the special role of workers in revolution was due partly to the aforementioned transitional phase of Russia's development, with capitalism not yet fully established, and partly to their lacking the appropriate analytical tools, i.e. the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. They were familiar with Marx's work but their acceptance of it was eclectic.<sup>17</sup> Despite this the populists are on the whole evaluated positively by Soviet historians with regard to the workers' movement. In general, since the remnants of feudalism slowed the growth of political thought among workers, the populist struggle was seen as progressive for workers. They helped the leaders of the working class to see their main political task- the overthrow of Tsarism- thus helping them on the way to conscious participation in the revolutionary struggle. Reality soon dispelled populist prejudices among the workers and they began to work out their own specific class interests, which overlapped with populism particularly in their democratic strivings.<sup>18</sup> The workers showed a tendency to independence, especially the *zavodskie*, and they quickly came to understand the importance of political struggle for guarantees against arbitrariness. This would lead eventually to a Social Democratic viewpoint; thus the workers overtook the populists in theoretical terms.<sup>19</sup>

At first, however, the workers' ideology was little different from the populists', reflecting the strong influence of the latter's utopian/peasant socialism. In their contact with and activity among urban workers, the populists are criticised for failing to see them as a separate class with specific interests, lumping them together with the *narod* as a whole. Their hope was to create popular propagandists, so they concentrated on the *fabrichnye* who could use their rural ties to spread propaganda in the villages. Nevertheless, it is noted,

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<sup>16</sup> Sh.M. Levin *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii* Moscow 1958 p.312

<sup>17</sup> S.S. Volk "Karl Marks, Fridrikh Engels i Narodnaya volya" in *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformnoi Rossii* p.25

<sup>18</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" pp.220-221

they did not ignore the *zavodskie*, nor the need to organise in the towns.<sup>20</sup> The distinction between *fabrichnye* (generally referring to the unskilled and often semi-peasant labour in the textile mills) and *zavodskie* (skilled, better-paid and more urbanised workers in heavy industries such as metals production) will become an important theme in this thesis, as we discuss the issue of the revolutionaries' constituency. The turn to political struggle by some *zemlevol'tsy* and *Narodnaya volya* helped the growth of political thought among workers, while the populists were forced to consider the growing workers' movement in their calculations. The workers' movement is also credited with attracting populists' attention to the towns in the late 1870s; thus a mutual influence of workers and populists is exercised.<sup>21</sup> However the populists never realised the specific interests of the urban proletariat as a class, separate from the *narod* as a whole. This relates to their denial of capitalism, which the populists saw as alien to Russia and non-progressive, since it would destroy the communal bases of popular life and strengthen the bourgeoisie. This was, for the Soviet historians, their major theoretical failing.

All in all then, after the silence of the Stalin years, Soviet historians came out for the populists of the 1870s, positively evaluating their progressive role as (objectively) democratic revolutionaries, praising their heroic struggle against absolutism and the remains of feudalism which obstructed Russia's inevitable capitalist development. In particular the gradual discarding of Bakuninist dogma and the realisation of the need for political change in Russia (as opposed to purely economic change) represents a significant step forward, and for this reason *Narodnaya volya* is particularly worthy of praise. On the negative side, the failure to understand the emerging class contradictions of capitalism (and the denial of capitalism generally), the nature of the state, the special role of the workers in revolution, and their mistaken belief in the socialist instincts of the peasants held them back from accomplishing a revolution. However in the transition stage from feudalism to capitalism through which Russia was

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<sup>19</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" p.223

<sup>20</sup> Antonov *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* p.157

passing, the populists represented a progressive force and can be held to be the predecessors of the Social Democrats.

## 2-2: Western Historiography of Populism

The historiography in English of the Russian populist movement is also not vast, particularly in comparison to that of the later Social Democratic movement. This stems, of course, from the fact that the Social Democrats in their Bolshevik guise were the historical "winners" in seizing power in Russia and populism has largely been seen as a dead end. Thus, in comparison with the historiography of the Russian revolution(s), work on populism is at a far less advanced stage and there has been less historical debate on the subject.<sup>22</sup>

Although there has been more room for differing interpretations of populism in the West than formerly existed in the Soviet Union, nevertheless there are some general trends common to historical writing in English on the subject. Firstly, like the Soviet writers, most Western authors have looked at the populists in a fairly favourable light. For some this stems from a rather condescending view of populism generally as the naive idealism of the young, a romantic movement far removed from the hard-headed political realism of Lenin.<sup>23</sup> Despite this it does appear to be a commonplace to view the populists as the precursors to the October revolution of 1917, at least in general terms.

In a similar way to the Soviet authors who tried to attach the Communist Party to a tradition of radicalism going back to the Decembrists, many Western authors see a progression of radical thought, based in a section of the

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<sup>21</sup> Filippov "Sootnoshenie" p.223

<sup>22</sup> The most extensive history in English of Russian Populism is Franco Venturi's *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983; Abbott Gleason's *Young Russia* Chicago 1983 deals with the movement in the 1860s, while Derek Offord's *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880s* Cambridge 1986 looks at the difficult years for the revolutionaries following the regicide of 1881; A. Walicki's *The Controversy over Capitalism* Oxford 1969 covers later populism and its disputes with the Marxists; on the ideologists of populism see eg. P. Pomper *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* Chicago/London 1972, J. Billington *Mikhailovskii and Russian Populism* Oxford 1958. Populism occupies half of A. Yarmolinsky's *Road to Revolution* Princeton 1957 and a good deal of A. Ulam's *In the Name of the People* New York 1977. On terrorism see D. Hardy *Land and Freedom* New York/Westport/London 1987, R. Seth *The Russian Terrorists* London 1966. Sergei Nechaev has attracted the attention of M. Prawdin *The Unmentionable Nechaev* and P. Pomper *Sergei Nechaev* New Brunswick 1979. On the émigrés see J. Meijer *The Russian Colony in Zurich* Assen 1955.

<sup>23</sup> Yarmolinsky *Road to Revolution* p.190

intelligentsia, searching for a way to destroy the autocracy and finally finding it.<sup>24</sup> Yarmolinsky, for example, claims that Leninism can be explained by looking at the tradition of earlier Russian radicalism.<sup>25</sup> Michael Prawdin sees in Lenin almost a carbon copy of Nechaev,<sup>26</sup> while for A. Weeks, Petr Tkachev is "The First Bolshevik".<sup>27</sup> In some works, notably Yarmolinsky's, this tends to give a rather linear impression and ignores or plays down the differing tendencies and the debates within Russian radicalism at any one time. Franco Venturi is less guilty of this, and in his vast survey mentions just about all the individuals and groups in the populist movement; nevertheless his focus is on the dominant groups and tendencies and a sense of linear progression is again conveyed: liberalism-nihilism-nechaevism-propagandism-buntarstvo-terrorism. The titles of these two works, *Roots of Revolution* and *Road to Revolution*, perhaps betray the fact that the populist movement is being studied with an eye to events in early twentieth-century Russia.<sup>28</sup>

While Soviet authors have made tendentious attempts to examine the links between the populists and the socialist movement of the West, focusing on rather tenuous connections with Marxist sections of the first International and the fact that some of Marx's works were available to populists in the 1870s, authors in the West have largely favoured an approach which looks at the Russian movement in isolation from that in Europe. This is not to say that the connections with the West are ignored completely, but when discussed, the focus has been largely on the émigrés, in particular Bakunin, Lavrov and Tkachev rather than on the Western movement as a whole. Venturi states in his preface that he is writing a chapter of the European socialist movement, and

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<sup>24</sup> Yarmolinsky *Road to Revolution*; F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution*. Venturi begins his study with the 1840s, while Yarmolinsky goes back to Radishchev.

<sup>25</sup> Yarmolinsky *Road to Revolution* p.xii

<sup>26</sup> M. Prawdin *The Unmentionable Nechaev* passim. The subtitle "A key to Bolshevism" is significant.

<sup>27</sup> A.L. Weeks *The First Bolshevik* New York/London 1968

<sup>28</sup> Venturi's original title was of course *Il populismo russo*; nevertheless in his introduction to the English edition, Isaiah Berlin notes the search for the roots of 1917; Venturi *Roots of Revolution* p.xxx

has thus made repeated reference to events in Italy;<sup>29</sup> however it seems to me that this is not actually the case, and such references as there are to Europe speak of, for example, the impact of great events such as the revolution of 1848 on the minds of Herzen or Bakunin.<sup>30</sup> Venturi does note, however, that the repercussions abroad of the Russian movement would be a fruitful area of study, and that his only concern has been to examine the movement in Russia itself.<sup>31</sup> Indeed such is the scale of Venturi's book that its expansion to include the socialist movement in Europe would have made it unwieldy to say the least.

Deborah Hardy's excellent study of the rise of terrorism within Russian populism in the late 1870s, while adding greater depth to previous studies by the examination of terror in relation to other populist theories and tactics (i.e. the "villagers" or *derevenshchiki*), also does not try to relate it to the rise of terrorism in Western Europe at the same time. James Billington's "Mikhailovskii and Russian Populism" denies even the influence of Lavrov and Bakunin<sup>32</sup> and cites Mikhailovskii as populism's most important figure, thereby placing his study on a firmly Russian footing which again isolates populism from western socialism.<sup>33</sup> Venturi effectively ignores Mikhailovskii, however. Billington also emphasises the influence of religious sectarianism in Russia on populism in formulating its "millenarian" outlook.<sup>34</sup>

Turning to the 1870s, which is the focus of this thesis, there are as far as I am aware no studies focusing on the decade as a whole, with the exception of the relevant chapters in Venturi. This is perhaps surprising as this was the decade when populism achieved the status of a broad revolutionary movement. Various individuals or ideologies have been dealt with separately, for example Lavrov<sup>35</sup>, Nechaev<sup>36</sup> or the rise of terror.<sup>37</sup> The tendencies outlined above in the

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<sup>29</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.xxxii

<sup>30</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.29

<sup>31</sup> Venturi p.836

<sup>32</sup> J. Billington *Mikhailovskii and Russian Populism* p.vi

<sup>33</sup> Billington does however acknowledge the influence of French thinkers, especially Proudhon, on Mikhailovskii's ideas; *Mikhailovskii and Russian Populism* p.129

<sup>34</sup> Billington *Mikhailovskii and Russian Populism* pp.120-128

<sup>35</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* 1972

<sup>36</sup> Prawdin *The Unmentionable Nechaev*; Pomper *Sergei Nechaev*

main apply equally to the 1870s, in that the movement is treated chronologically, progressing through various stages leading to the regicide of 1881, and is not contextualised with the movement in Europe. Much is made of Nechaev both as a precursor of Lenin, and in his involvement with Bakunin (the argument over the authorship of the *Catechism of the Revolutionary* is still unresolved). Nechaev is also credited indirectly with the founding of the Chaikovskii circle, in that the disgust aroused by his "Jesuitical schemes" and disagreement with his "Bakuninism" led to the formation of a circle based on the communal spirit rather than ideology, trust and personal friendship rather than submission to discipline.<sup>38</sup> The Chaikovskii circle's "moral purity" is thus emphasised. Their ideas are best expressed by Flerovskii or Lavrov in that they engaged in peaceful propaganda rather than "Bakuninist" attempts to foment *bunty*, or revolts.<sup>39</sup> This downplays the debates within the group and between the various provisional centres, and the drift to the left which took place in the group during the early 1870s. Some writers, however, have questioned the absence of specific ideology within the group; Martin Miller notes the appearance of a programme in 1871,<sup>40</sup> while Pamela Sears McKinsey makes a case for the influence of Lasalle on the circle.<sup>41</sup>

The mid-1870s, after the "children's crusade"<sup>42</sup> of the movement to the people, is depicted as a period of dejection and disorganisation as the populists reassessed their ideas and embarked upon the Bakuninist policies of *Zemlya i volya*. Again, the movement is more or less assessed as a single whole, and the numerous tendencies which operated within and outside of *Zemlya i volya* are played down. The groups of 1875-1877 are paid scant attention, with the exception of the organisers of the Chigirin conspiracy, which has been the subject of a fascinating study by Daniel Field.<sup>43</sup> Generally, however, this period

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<sup>37</sup> Hardy *Land and Freedom*

<sup>38</sup> Yarmolinsky *Road to Revolution* p.178; Venturi *Roots of Revolution* p.469

<sup>39</sup> Venturi *Roots of Revolution* p.487

<sup>40</sup> M. Miller "Ideological Conflicts in Russian Populism". *Slavic Review* XXIX no.1 March 1970

<sup>41</sup> P.S. McKinsey "From City Workers to Peasantry". *Slavic Review* XXXVIII no.4 December 1979

<sup>42</sup> Yarmolinsky *Road to Revolution* p.189

<sup>43</sup> D. Field *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* London 1989



is characterised as the preparation of the terrorist period of *Narodnaya volya*, and it is to terrorism that most of the space is given. As previously noted, an exception is Deborah Hardy's *Land and Freedom*.

Finally, the end of the 1870s and the first years of the 1880s are the period of *Narodnaya volya*. Venturi for example dismisses other tendencies such as *Chernyi peredel* with a few pages<sup>44</sup>. It is generally agreed that the terrorist policy grew out of armed resistance to government repression, although this argument has been questioned in a thesis by D.W. Hay, who argues that in fact the impetus to terror came from within the movement, from a wing which advocated political rather than full-scale social and economic change.<sup>45</sup> This throws into question also the assumption that the regicide of 1881 was intended to spark a revolution, and suggests that *Narodnaya volya* were in fact trying to force the government to grant a constitution.

In the light of the above, it is my intention in this thesis to focus on the divisions and debates in the populist movement in order to avoid the impression that the movement simply progressed chronologically under the influence of government repressions or failed propaganda attempts towards terrorism, and hopefully to give a fuller picture of the internal dynamics of the movement. Furthermore, by comparing it with the debates within the anarchist movement and the turn to terrorism there, I hope to set populism in the broader context of socialism in Europe and assess the mutual impact one upon the other of European Socialism and Russian Populism.

### 2-3: Sources

The sources I intend to examine for this thesis will on the whole not be new. As far as I am aware, little or no new material has come to light recently on the history of the populist movement. However, it should be pointed out that this is not, in fact, the aim of the thesis. As stated above, what I hope to accomplish is not the discovery of untapped source material, but the re-examination of sources known to historians of Russian populism, alongside a

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<sup>44</sup> Venturi *Roots of Revolution* pp.658-664

study of the contemporary anarchist movement in Europe. In this way, I hope to be able to compare and contrast particular points of debate within the two movements, and place populism in the broader context of revolutionary socialism across Europe in the 1870s, something which, as the above study of the historiography of populism shows, has up to now been neglected.

Nevertheless, some new primary material will be made use of in the course of this thesis. I have examined the files of the Third Section for the 1870s in the State Archive of the Russian Federation<sup>46</sup>; these have shown the existence of smaller populist groups across the Russian Empire, outside of, but apparently connected to, the dominant groupings such as the Chaikovskii circle or *Zemlya i volya*. Police files must, of course, be used with great caution; all states are paranoid to some degree, and their secret services particularly so. It is therefore important not to accept at face value their evaluation of what might be a student discussion group, for example, as a nest of revolutionaries. On the other hand, where revolutionary literature has been seized, or communications intercepted, this may be taken as reasonably reliable evidence of the revolutionary intent of such groupings. It should also be borne in mind that, to this day, police forces tend to assume that revolutionary movements consist of conspiracies of malefactors, with members of shadowy groupings acting on the instructions of a central command; the possibility of local initiative is often ignored.

Most of the other primary material on the populist movement which I have examined has been published, either in book form or as journal articles. Particularly valuable have been the journals *Katorga i ssylka*, published throughout the 1920s and into the '30s, and *Byloe*, mainly from 1906-7.<sup>47</sup> These

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<sup>45</sup> D.W. Hay *The Development of the Revolutionary Movement in the South of the Russian Empire 1873-1883* PhD thesis, University of Glasgow 1983

<sup>46</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii. The Third Section files are in Opis' 109, tret'ya ekspeditsiya.

<sup>47</sup> Both of these journals are available on microfilm in the Baykov Library of the University of Birmingham, and other academic libraries. Many of the book-length memoirs of the populists were republished in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and '70s. European anarchists seem to have been less inclined to write memoirs, with the notable exception of Kropotkin: the version I have used is P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1970.

sources are almost all memoir accounts written by those who took part in the movement of the 1870s, and as such must again be used with care. Quite apart from the lapses of memory which a memoirist is liable to suffer when writing about the events of many years ago, there is a tendency for memoirs to be coloured by hindsight, subsequent historical events and developments, and the writer's personal and political development. For example, it would not be appropriate to read Kropotkin's account of the populist movement without being aware of his passionate commitment to anarchism.

The other major group of primary sources which I have made use of consists of the literature produced by individuals and groups during the 1870s. These sources have proved invaluable in evaluating the ideological positions of the various groups under scrutiny, as well as indicating the major themes of the thesis. Again, these sources have been both published and unpublished. Some of the writings of major figures such as Bakunin and Kropotkin continue to be published as books or anthologies in several languages, and the published Bakunin archive has proved valuable;<sup>48</sup> other books have been preserved on microfilm, having long since disappeared from publishing lists.<sup>49</sup> I have also made use of pamphlets, flyers and proclamations produced by various revolutionary groups in Russia and Europe, some of which have been published in anthologies<sup>50</sup> (this is more true of the Russian groups than the European). Many groups produced newspapers; a few have been published,<sup>51</sup> others preserved by institutions such as the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam.<sup>52</sup> Finally, I have examined, where possible, the regulations and programmes of revolutionary groups; again, many of those pertaining to Russian populism have been published in anthologies.

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<sup>48</sup> *Archives Bakounine* (7 vols.) Leiden 1961-1981

<sup>49</sup> The major example for this thesis is Z.K. Ralli's *Sytye i golodnye* Geneva 1875, which is preserved in the Houghton microfilmed collection of Russian Revolutionary Literature, no.579

<sup>50</sup> The best is B.S. Itenberg/ S.S. Volk (eds.) *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov XIX veka* (2 vols.) Moscow 1964-5

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, B. Bazilevskii (ed.) *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika 70kh godov* Paris 1905

<sup>52</sup> Many anarchist newspapers of the 1870s are preserved here, for example, *Le Révolté*, *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne*.

Finally, I have also made extensive use of secondary sources whilst writing this thesis, for background information (on, for example, the earlier development of anarchism and populism, and the International<sup>53</sup>), and information on particular aspects of populism and anarchism, as well as to identify points of historical debate. Only very rarely is it possible to write history which has not been written before; it is therefore vital to take secondary literature into account, and to examine it as closely and critically as primary material.

### **3: Early Development of Anarchism and Populism**

This section is intended to give an outline of the development of the theories and practices of anarchism in Europe and of the socialist movement in Russia in the middle of the last century up to the early 1870s, with the aim of providing some background for the thesis and facilitating some comparison between the two movements. Russian populism and European anarchism as they developed in the second half of the nineteenth century share some common features, and some common ideological bases. Both hoped to bring about the destruction of the current political and economic order in their respective geographical areas by means of a violent revolution. Both looked to peasants and workers as the makers and beneficiaries of the revolution and the social justice which would follow. There was a powerful mistrust within the populist movement of the state and government, a mistrust which was one of the central tenets of anarchism. Neither movement however was monolithic, and within both there were debates over tactics, organisational forms, and constituencies. The arguments within the populist movement over centralist or federalist organisation, for example, was the same issue which divided Marxists and anarchists in the West. Tactical debates over written and spoken propaganda of socialism as against violent insurrectionism went on in both movements.

#### **3-1: Anarchism in Europe**

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<sup>53</sup> Particularly valuable in this regard have been F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 and P. Marshall *Demanding the Impossible* London 1992

"Anarchism: the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government - harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being."<sup>54</sup> Thus reads Kropotkin's definition of the anarchist ideal, written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1910. While anarchism embraces many different currents of thought and strategy, certain basic assumptions and themes are common to all anarchists. All reject the legitimacy of government and the state, and condemn imposed political authority, hierarchy and domination. They seek to establish the condition of anarchy, that is to say, a decentralised and self-regulating society consisting of a federation of voluntary associations of free and equal individuals.<sup>55</sup>

Although anarchists like to trace their heritage back to ancient times, anarchism finds its first modern expression in William Godwin's "Enquiry Concerning Political Justice" of 1793, which accompanied the upsurge of radicalism surrounding the French Revolution and called for the abolition of the "brute engine" of political government.<sup>56</sup> Anarchism as a fully-fledged political and social movement dates from the mid-nineteenth century, emerging with the works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the 1840s in the form of a mutualist socialism, a system of exchange of products based on "labour value", bypassing merchants, banks and so on by direct exchange. Followers of Proudhon were to make up a substantial part of the membership of the International Workingmen's Association in its early days in the mid-1860s.

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<sup>54</sup> P. Kropotkin *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* London 1987 p.7

<sup>55</sup> Marshall *Demanding the Impossible* London 1992 p.3 This is the most comprehensive history of anarchism currently available in English. See also G. Woodcock *Anarchism* (n.p.) 1962; J. Joll *The Anarchists* London 1964; M. Nettlau *A Short History of Anarchism* London 1996 (this is a summary of his multi-volume *Geschichte der Anarchie* Berlin 1927-1931 which has not been translated into English); D. Miller *Anarchism* London 1984.

<sup>56</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.5

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was born in the Franche-Comté region of France, and became a printer in Besançon, where he came into contact with socialists, including Fourier. Proudhon's first political work appeared at the end of the 1830s in the form of a competition essay on the celebration of Sunday, which he used as a vehicle for his social ideas. Calling for political and social equality he wrote "It is for societies to submit only to themselves; their salvation comes only from their own hands."<sup>57</sup> This essay also contained his first attack on property, which he defined as ownership which produces income without work. This attack was expanded in "What is Property?" (1840). Possession of tools, land, dwelling and so on, that is, the necessities of day-to-day existence, should be respected. The property which Proudhon condemned was not possession as such, but that which benefited one class at the expense of another, upheld inequality and allowed certain people to live comfortably without working. The extra value which was created by men working together was unjustly appropriated by these proprietors; workers are forced as consumers to buy back the very products they have created for more than they were paid for it, and since this increase represents no intrinsic value added to the product, it is theft. Thus "Property is theft" answered the title's question. Proudhon also criticised dependency on the state, and theories of central/state control and ownership. His concern was for individuals and groups to be in control of their lives and work; thus he attacked the communist idea which made the state the arch-proprietor and "subordinates the individual to the collective".<sup>58</sup> He proclaimed himself an anarchist, looking for a society with no master or sovereign, where justice has overcome selfishness. This society is not however outlined as yet; "What is Property?" remained purely a critique.

Proudhon was greatly admired by the Russians Herzen and Bakunin, both of whom absorbed and developed his ideas. Marx however considered him a petit-bourgeois idealist. The split between authoritarian and libertarian socialism can be seen emerging here, and is amplified in Proudhon's "System

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<sup>57</sup> K.S. Vincent *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism*, New York/Oxford 1984 p.59

of Economic Contradictions" (1846). Here he attacked not only democracy as an instrument of class rule, but also the communists, "fanatics of state power...[who believe] the individual comes into being after society, not society after the individual."<sup>59</sup> Here for the first time he advocated his mutualist system, a form of socialism based on direct exchange and mutual credit.

Proudhon's mutualism was based on his experience of workers' societies in Lyon, which convinced him of the possibility of these societies being a vehicle for social change. From the 1830s associations of workers had begun to pursue political ends, and some were advocating a social transformation in which associations would allow workers control over the product of their labour.<sup>60</sup> In Proudhon's scheme, an association could be based in a trade or enterprise and all workers would be free to join. Products would be valued according to labour time and could be exchanged with other associations by means of labour cheques. Such a scheme appealed not only to workers but to peasants and low-level employees generally, all of whom had an interest in the abolition of the wage system. Bit by bit associations would take control of the economic process, and as they grew and spread their economic organisation would undermine the political regime, spelling the end of the state. This scheme of federated associations of producers linked by free contracts would remain the basis of Proudhon's programme.

In terms of the tactics to be pursued for the transformation of society, the mutualists and Proudhon looked to co-operativism rather than revolution. Proudhon predicted that producers' associations would overrun states and leaders with their "natural social order". When he met Marx in 1844 he opposed this idea to Marx's political-revolutionary action; for Proudhon the workers' associations would take over more and more of the economy from the proprietors and cause the property system to wither.<sup>61</sup> Proudhon was convinced that political action was the wrong way to bring about social revolution. Having

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<sup>58</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.239

<sup>59</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.242

<sup>60</sup> Vincent *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon...* p.132

<sup>61</sup> E. Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* London 1979 p.74

attacked the capitalist system in his "System of Economic Contradictions", he also attacked the principle of authority which allowed workers to become effectively the property of capitalists, and thus also the solutions offered by socialists such as Blanc, Blanqui and Marx which fall back on authority. The state, for Proudhon, was the embodiment of the authority principle in its modern, secular form; it was unavoidably attached to property and thus unavoidably against the proletariat. What, he asked, was the point of dethroning God to replace Him with the state? It was the whole idea of externalised authority, state or providential, which had to be repudiated. State socialism would leave the workers even more chained to authority than before, since all it accomplished was to transfer to the state the authority of the proprietor rather than accomplishing the destruction of property and authority.<sup>62</sup>

In 1848, the revolution in France saw Proudhon pushing for real social and economic change; he was concerned at the lack of ideas behind the revolution, and foresaw not the inauguration of a new society, but a period of chaos followed by reaction. He saw the working class allow power to slip from its grasp and a political revolution install a new oppressor.<sup>63</sup> Differences with Marx again became clear; Marx wanted the workers to ally with the bourgeoisie, Proudhon wanted the bourgeoisie to submit to the workers; Marx saw the social war as inevitable and creative, Proudhon saw it as avoidable and destructive; Marx looked for the conquest of political power by the workers, Proudhon saw it as at best irrelevant, at worst self-defeating.<sup>64</sup>

Proudhon attacked the "confidence trick" of universal suffrage and attacked the belief of the new government that such palliatives could solve the social question. He called for a mutual credit association among workers to enable them to start their own enterprises which could then participate in direct exchange schemes. In 1849 he did in fact try to set up a People's Bank, but despite attracting over 13,000 members it did not see the year out as the state set about attacking both it and Proudhon personally. After a brief spell in the

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<sup>62</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* p.90

<sup>63</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* p.102



National Assembly, (which he regretted for his separation from the masses) trying in vain to push for economic reforms, Proudhon was imprisoned for his attacks on Louis Napoleon, for "stirring up hatred for the government, provocation to civil war and attacks on the constitution and property". However the prison regime was lax enough for him to write his "General Idea of the Revolution" (1851), where he attacked 1789 and 1848 for failure to deal with economic problems and for creating new elites.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1850s Proudhon formulated his federalist ideas, his most important contribution to anarchist theory. Labour organisations remained the basic social units, but he also included communal and regional bodies for a geographic as well as professional federalism. The co-ordinating principle was to be the free contract. He urged the formation of associations and abstention from the politics of the Empire; while possibilities had existed in the Assembly for change in 1848, under the Empire none was possible. "The Federal Principle" (1863) summed up his ideas; mutualist associations of independent, property owning workers would exchange products based on labour value and organise relations between associations on the basis of free contracts. Society should be arranged from the bottom up, with lower levels having control over the higher. All units are free to secede at any time, and any delegates to assemblies are subject to instant recall.

Proudhon's final work, "On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes" (1865) again called on workers to avoid electoral politics, which some of his supporters led by Henri Tolain were advocating, believing that the workers needed representatives in parliament. Workers, he said, should take no part in government; if they did, they would find themselves constrained by its rules. The workers' aspirations were incompatible with the middle class' democratic system; mutualism would eliminate conventional politics and do away with the political centre of parliament, and workers should concentrate not on political

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<sup>64</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* p.103

<sup>65</sup> Vincent *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon...* p.192

action and revolution but on taking over the economy.<sup>66</sup> Here in essence is the dispute which was to split the International; Proudhon's criticism of government and centralism applied also to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the communist state, which he saw as anonymous tyranny and universal servitude.<sup>67</sup> He further insisted that workers and peasants had the same interests, and division in society was between haves and have-nots; no special role was assigned to the proletariat. This was a position held by Bakunin as his anarchist ideas developed; and it was shared by many of the Russian populists.

Proudhon's attacks on the state, the church and capitalism are based in a philosophy which denies the Absolute of Hegel; political and economic strife comes from the conflict between men and institutions wedded to the Absolute, to fixity, stasis and final solutions. To paraphrase, it might be said that Proudhon promoted an "ecological balance" of evolution and continuous change.<sup>68</sup> Society has an "ecosystem" of mutually balancing tensions and tolerances, just as in nature. Reified systems of authority such as the church and the state are contrary to this natural system. For the church justice is external and handed down by a higher authority; Original Sin, which is used to explain the existence of evil in the work of a just creator means that man can only be saved by divine intervention, hence the power of the church. This applies to the state also; the communists and utopians replace God with the Phalanstery or the socialist state, in which state and society become one and the individual is degradingly subordinated to it.<sup>69</sup>

Proudhon's work contains problems and contradictions; in his federalist works it becomes apparent that disputes will be solved by an independent arbiter - is this a slip into liberalism? He also accepted at times the notion of transitional government despite his attacks on the government principle. Were his attempts to use the national Assembly, and his appeals to Napoleon realistic, "possibilist" tactics or abandonment of ideology? He expressed an

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<sup>66</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* p.278

<sup>67</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.258

<sup>68</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* p.203

<sup>69</sup> Hyams *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* pp.217-219

almost nationalistic belief in France, and could be anti-Semitic and racist. Furthermore his doctrine of equality was reserved for males; women he considered innately inferior beings, whose place was in the home and whose role was motherhood. By denying her equality before the law, society treats woman according to her aptitudes, he claimed.

Proudhon's federalism, mutualism and anti-statism formed the basis of anarchism in the 19th century, and his ideas were taken up by many sections of the International Workingmen's Association, where they were at odds with the centralising tendencies of Marx, particularly when developed in a more rigorous and revolutionary form by Bakunin. The development of Bakunin's ideas will be examined more fully in Chapter 1, so I will give only a brief outline here. Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin's intellectual life began under the influence of German idealism, and joined the left critique of Hegel being developed by Feuerbach. He was involved in Wilhelm Weitling's communist project, and expressed admiration for Marx, but was wary of his authoritarianism, and felt Proudhon had a better feeling for freedom. His calls for Polish independence led to his expulsion from France in 1847; however he returned to Paris in 1848 to take part in the revolution. He attended the Slav congress in Prague hoping to incite a revolution, and later that year was involved in the Dresden uprising. He was arrested following this and deported to Russia, where he was imprisoned without trial. Only after the accession of Alexander II was his sentence commuted to exile in Siberia, whence he escaped. In 1863 he tried to take part in the Polish insurrection, but his expedition failed to arrive. Moving on to Italy, Bakunin's focus began to shift away from the Slavs to a fully fledged anarchism as he worked with the socialists Carlo Pisacane and Giuseppe Fanelli. Pisacane's call for an Italy organised from the bottom up on the basis of free association became the central plank of Bakunin's programme.<sup>70</sup> Bakunin joined the International in 1868 and found support in Switzerland, Spain, France and Italy for his programme. He saw his task as providing socialist ideas and conscience through propaganda, education and above all practical action.

Bakunin accepted much of Marx's analysis of capitalism and acknowledged this intellectual debt. Where the two came to differ as Bakunin developed his collectivist anarchism was on the nature of the state and authority, and the revolutionary potential of the various social classes. Bakunin attacked abstract authority in the form of the state, formalised science, capitalist production and bourgeois democracy, for its inability to comprehend the conditions of individuals in the real world.<sup>71</sup> The state for Bakunin was an instrument of class rule, and there can be no state if there is no ruling class to run it. Furthermore, any class which gains control of such an institution tries to perpetuate that control. This analysis was at the centre of the split in the International between Marxists and anarchists. For Marx, the state was oppressive because it was in the hands of the bourgeoisie; once in the hands of the proletariat, it would be liberatory. For Bakunin, the state was oppressive *per se*; hence, neither involvement in electoral politics à la Lasalle, nor a revolutionary seizure of the state and a "dictatorship of the proletariat" could help the oppressed. Bakunin's analysis of the state as a self-perpetuating form of oppression, capable of creating its own ruling elite from whoever controlled, it meant that for any revolution to be liberatory the state and its institutions had to be liquidated.<sup>72</sup>

A further difference with Marx was on the subject of class; Bakunin concluded that despite numerous shadings and differences there were fundamentally two classes generated by capitalism, the working and the privileged classes. Not just the industrial proletariat but most peasants and lower commercial and service employees were objectively exploited and thus potentially revolutionary. Indeed Bakunin noted two factions within the urban working class, the highly skilled and well paid, with semi-bourgeois affectations, and the poorly paid "rabble", or lumpenproletariat. While the latter were dismissed by Marx, Bakunin saw in them a lack of "contamination" by bourgeois

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<sup>70</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.276

<sup>71</sup> R. Saltman *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* Westport/London 1983 p.32

<sup>72</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.98

attitudes and a more antagonistic position towards the existing order.<sup>73</sup> This distinction is also raised in memoirs of populist activity in Russia, with the populists preferring to associate themselves with the latter category (*fabrichnye*) rather than the former (*zavodskie*).<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the peasants, Bakunin argued, were essential to the revolution. While historically speaking they may have developed a socialist "instinct", they were forced into individualism just to survive. Thus they would oppose any programme to take away their land, and become receptive to bourgeois ideas on private property. A statist programme of nationalisation would bring about peasant revolts against the revolution and force military repression. Therefore the peasants should be encouraged to seize the land for themselves; this would automatically place them in conflict with landowners, the church and the state, and their village institutions would be pitted against state agencies.<sup>75</sup> This is a more radical programme than that of Proudhon, who hoped that workers and peasants, by associating mutually and expanding their economic organisation, would cause capitalism to collapse without violent revolution.

Bakunin insisted that if there were to be any chance of a future society bringing about the maximum possible freedom it had to spring from autonomous groups working together freely; a society organised from the bottom upwards. This also applied to revolutionary organisations; the egalitarian society was to be prepared in and through the revolutionary process. Abdication of authority to a centralised body in the revolutionary organisation would be reflected after the revolution on a broader scale; hence the argument with Marx over the Council's accumulation of powers in the International. Self-activity was the only way to bring about a liberatory revolution according to Bakunin.<sup>76</sup> Within this schema however, Bakunin noted the need for a catalyst organisation composed of *déclassé* elements from the intelligentsia who had access to knowledge and organisational skills which workers were denied. The

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<sup>73</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought* p.138

<sup>74</sup> See R. Zelnik "Populists and Workers" *Soviet Studies* 24 1972 pp.251-269

<sup>75</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.147

<sup>76</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought* p.113

task of the revolutionary association would be an informal presence in local working-class organisations, not to lead but to provide theoretical and organisational help, propaganda and links with other organisations to enable concerted action.

The ideas of both Proudhon and Bakunin exerted an influence on socialist and workers' movements across Europe, but the strongest support came from Italy and later from Spain. In Italy some workers were active in the national movement, among them were some federalists, but no true libertarian socialists. However, Carlo Pisacane rejected both the federal and unitary state and proposed dividing Italy into communes. He expressed socialism as the combination of liberty and association. To achieve his goal he proposed that since ideas evolve from facts, not facts from ideas, and since the people will not be free when they are educated but educated when they are free, insurrections had to be carried out, which would inspire the peasants and workers by their example.<sup>77</sup> This idea was maintained in Italian anarchism into the 1870s and formed the basis for their formulation of propaganda by deed. Pisacane tried to put his ideas into practice in a confrontation with Bourbon soldiers at Sapri in the kingdom of Naples in 1857 which ended in fiasco. His work was continued by Giuseppe Fanelli, who worked with Bakunin and was later instrumental in transporting his ideas to Spain.

Bakunin went to Italy in 1864, apparently having been asked by Marx to undermine Mazzini in favour of the International.<sup>78</sup> By 1865 however he was attempting to form a secret Brotherhood, first in Florence and then in Naples. The years which Bakunin spent in Italy helped lay the foundations of his anarchism. 1848 had convinced him that the middle class was counterrevolutionary and had to be overthrown along with its institutions. He looked now to the peasants, artisans, workers, déclassé intellectuals and the lumpenproletariat.<sup>79</sup> As noted above, it was an Italian, Giuseppe Fanelli, who was largely responsible for taking Bakuninism to Spain at the end of the 1860s.

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<sup>77</sup> Nettlau *A Short History of Anarchism* p.91

<sup>78</sup> T. Ravindranathan *Bakunin and the Italians* Kingston/Montreal 1988 p.27

The native federalism of Pi y Margall was enhanced by Bakunin's ideas from 1868. Spanish workers' associations, which had their beginnings in the 1840s, were won over to Bakuninism, and again their first national congress of the International took an anarchist line. Bakunin formed an International Alliance of Socialist Democracy in the late 1860s which was to be the organisation to organise and co-ordinate the revolution; however when he tried to introduce it into the International he was denied entry by the General Council. The Alliance had sections in Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France. The Alliance was formally dissolved and its sections reconstituted as sections of the International in 1869. These sections were Bakunin's main bases of support in his conflict with Marx and the General Council in the early 1870s.

Unlike Proudhon, Bakunin believed in revolution as the only means to overturn the existing order in Europe. This revolution would take the form of insurrections spreading from one downtrodden population to another. The revolutionary organisation, the International, would consist not only of conscious workers but also of a semi-conspiratorial group of revolutionaries whose job it was to arouse the people to rebellion, and co-ordinate risings for maximum impact; what Bakunin called the "General Staff" of the revolution. Workers should seize the means of production and run them for their own benefit; peasants should seize the land and put it into communal ownership. This was to become the basic programme of the anarchists in the International until the late 1870s. Many sections recognised the worth of strikes, but for the most part they were considered to be of more educational than revolutionary value, teaching the workers who their enemies were, and that the state would always come to the aid of the bosses.

### 3-2: Socialism in Russia<sup>80</sup>

Apart from Bakunin's obvious influence on the socialist and working class movements of Western Europe, a number of his ideas can be seen to

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<sup>79</sup> N. Pernicone *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* Princeton 1993 p.15

<sup>80</sup> This section is based largely on the relevant chapters of Venturi's *Roots of Revolution*; see also, eg., E. Acton *Alexander Herzen and the Role of the Intellectual Revolutionary* London 1979; A. Gleason *Young Russia* Chicago 1983; I. Berlin *Russian Thinkers* London 1978

parallel later populist ideas in Russia; the possibility of passing from a feudal/agricultural to a socialist society without a period of capitalist development, the importance of the peasants in a revolution, the rejection of constitutional/electoral paths to change, lack of faith in the state and a belief in the ability of ordinary workers and peasants to take charge of their own affairs. However, while Bakunin undoubtedly influenced Populism, it is not possible to equate Bakuninism and Populism; Bakunin did not arrive at an anarchist position until the 1860s, and unlike his legend, his ideas did not reach Russia in written form until the end of that decade, and anarchist populism emerged only in the early 1870s. For the earlier foundations of Russian Populism we must look first to Alexander Herzen.

Early in his life Herzen was interested in the socialism of Fourier and Saint-Simon, and formed a secret circle to spread their ideas in Russia, which led to his arrest and exile. On his release he began to espouse the idea that Russia should be westernised, placing himself in opposition to the Russian Hegelians (who at the time included Bakunin and Belinsky) and the Slavophiles. On returning from a second period of exile Herzen, like Bakunin, tried to develop a theory of action, parallel to the left Hegelians and Feuerbach in Paris. He was also impressed by Proudhon's attack on property, and searched through the ideas of the Utopian socialists and the communists. However the work of Baron Haxthausen attracted Herzen's attention to the peasant commune, and he saw that the *obshchina* needed to play a part in the evolution of the Russian state and society. Together with his socialism this was the germ of a populist vision.<sup>81</sup> However with the westernising movement and the liberalism of the 1840s seemingly in a blind alley, unable to work with the reactionary government of Nicholas I, the socialists or the Slavophiles, Herzen decided to leave Russia in 1847.

From France, Herzen wrote of the impending collapse of bourgeois rule, and the end of Utopian socialism; socialism was now entering the political arena. When the revolution did come Herzen blamed its failure on lack of



preparation and ideas, as Proudhon had done. In fact Herzen was one of Proudhon's few supporters in France at the time, and helped him financially. This friendship, as well as the events of June 1848 encouraged Herzen to break from the liberal bourgeoisie and put his faith in the people.<sup>82</sup> He hoped that the peasants would continue the revolution, and attacked the ideologies of the modern state as abstract religion. But as the revolution died, Herzen asked himself: was European civilisation too old and tired to throw up a socialist revolution? Could the future now belong to Russia, which had not seen the rise of the bourgeoisie and the failures of 1848? He believed that Russia, free of Western traditions, could apply socialism to its agrarian communities and avoid bourgeois revolutions. So he looked for a peasant rising. He called for revolutionaries to act "within and with the people. The man who feels himself to be so near the people that he has been virtually freed by them from the atmosphere of artificial civilisation... will be able to speak to the people, and must do so."<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile back in Russia the intelligentsia movement stood at a cross-roads of playing a political part in national life, or creating a more radical revolutionary movement. The *Petrashkevtsy* were one such group; this circle entertained ideas ranging from reform in collaboration with the Tsarist government to Jacobinism, their desire for change fanned by the revolutionary winds blowing from France and Germany, which also led to a fearful Russian government ruthlessly disbanding the group. The government had been concerned about the possibility of peasant unrest since the 1830s, when a committee of enquiry had been set up. However, noble conservatism and a fear of reform as a "slippery slope" prevented change, and a more profound reaction set in after 1848. Alexander II's reign appeared at first to offer some hope of reform; by the end of the 1850s Herzen was calling on the intelligentsia to play a part in politics and reforms, and his *Kolokol* was campaigning not against absolutism *per se* but against abuses of power, corruption and so on.

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<sup>81</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.22

<sup>82</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.29

When the emancipation came it was, however, greeted with scorn. *Kolokol* began to drift back towards agrarian socialism and called now for young *intelligenty* to go to the people, to spread knowledge and study their conditions. The *Kolokol* also tried to support the Polish insurrection, forming links with the Poles and with the secret society *Zemlya i volya* in Russia. But from the late 1850s, intelligentsia radicalism began to leave Herzen and the *Kolokol* behind; he was criticised as an "aristocrat", for trying to work with liberals, for supposedly abandoning his former socialism. The leading light and later martyr of this new radicalism was Chernyshevskii.

Nikolai Chernyshevskii was already an admirer of the socialists by 1848, and like Herzen was dismayed by the behaviour of Europe's liberals that year. At first he looked to dictatorship to change the social order, but the strength of the reaction in Europe led him to the opposite belief.<sup>84</sup> Through literary criticism he tried to tackle the problems of relations with the west, popular traditions, the role of the state and the responsibilities of writers in Russia. When it became clear that there would be emancipation for the serfs, Chernyshevskii was surprised and pleased; at any rate, his published response was at least as enthusiastic as Herzen's. He pushed for the intelligentsia to unite to obtain the best conclusion for the emancipation project: freedom with land for the peasants. He tried to inject an element of socialism, praising the potentially collectivist landholding system of the peasants, and from this starting point began to question the wisdom of capitalism arriving in Russia and destroying her collectivist traditions. Russia, he argued, did not have to follow the west but could learn from its mistakes and obtain more rapid and humane development.

Chernyshevskii's campaign for emancipation with land isolated him from most liberals, and increasing censorship prevented his overtly political writing. Cut off from reform, he became increasingly radical, and he drew attacks from literary figures, whom he in turn accused of lack of character and energy. He also fell out with Herzen, whose attempts to encourage reforms and denounce

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<sup>83</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.35

<sup>84</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.139

abuses he interpreted as leaving absolutism intact and unchanged. By the end of the 1850s he had become the nucleus of Russian radicalism, and began to call for an independent organisation which would avoid working with government or liberals and concentrate on fundamental social change. Young intellectuals should cease looking to the administration but should join the peasants. As the peasant unrest broke out in the early 1860s, and his collaborators became increasingly involved with groups like *Zemlya i volya*, Chernyshevskii's position as Russia's best-known radical made his arrest inevitable. His *Letters Without an Address* of 1862 tried to broaden and deepen the movement of the "new people", the young radical intellectuals of lower-class backgrounds. His arrest followed soon after; however, perhaps his most influential work, *What is to be Done?* was written in captivity. Despite its artistic shortcomings this book influenced a generation of radicals with its portrayal of youth trying to create a new life based on personal freedom and devotion to the people.

As the peasant unrest in the Russian countryside grew in the first years of the 1860s a student movement was also growing in the towns. From the 1850s students in Russia had been allowed more liberty to control their own internal organisations such as libraries, communal dining halls and welfare funds. However contact with intellectuals and the social movement, and the influence of the likes of Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov fuelled broader demands for more dignified treatment, for a say in the running of universities and standards of scholarship. As reaction set in and privileges began to be eroded, student meetings became more political, and demonstrations and walkouts closed many faculties in the capital and the provinces in 1861-2. The more radical elements moved towards the secret societies like *Zemlya i volya*. Ogarev's article in *Kolokol* in 1862 summed up the mood of the growing movement: let the universities close, he wrote, and let the young disperse among the people. To become a free man it is essential to go to the people.

Meanwhile words were being exchanged for action as *Zemlya i volya* grew up in 1861. This was the first coherent clandestine movement to try to put the revolutionary ideas of the time into practice. Their guiding spirit was Chernyshevskii, and like him their first programme attacked the form of the emancipation and called for freedom with land, local self-government and a national assembly. *Zemlya i volya* consisted of a collection of small groups, mostly autonomous, consisting largely of students, all across the country. They looked to the people to bring change, and hoped to guide and represent the peasant movement. They tried to organise the "hostile minority" against the government, and to give the student movement a more political significance. However their involvement with the Polish insurrection brought about their downfall; they negotiated with the Poles to try to co-ordinate action against the Russian government, but all they were really able to do was propagandise the Polish cause. In the event the uprising took place with its leaders having omitted to notify the Russians, but they were implicated and their organisation broken up.

At about the same time a new trend in Populism, which was to achieve great significance later, was growing up in Moscow. The Society of Communists, better known as Young Russia, was started by P. Zaichnevskii and his friends. They began by selling lithograph copies of socialist works and using the money to help poor students. They founded a secret press and in 1861 issued a proclamation calling on the Poles to turn on the common enemy under a common socialist banner. They also looked for ways to reach the people; Zaichnevskii suggested students spread propaganda in their home provinces during the summer. Some actually did so, and reported some success.<sup>85</sup> However Zaichnevskii saw it as his duty to provide the peasants with a programme and for this he turned to Jacobinism. The manifesto addressed to "Young Russia" predicted a bloody revolution and proposed local and national assemblies and communal land ownership, a federal republic with free education and full rights for women. To achieve this a revolutionary party would

lead a popular rising and would implement its policies via a central government. Their ideal remained the *obshchina*, their peasant socialist programme was common to other populists, but what set Young Russia apart was its ruthless political tactics. For this they were attacked by Herzen, Bakunin and *Zemlya i volya*; however they influenced Petr Tkachev, who was involved in a similar group in St. Petersburg and would later become the leading light in Russian Jacobinism.

Similar ideas were expressed by the critic Pisarev and the *Russkoe slovo* in the 1860s, who looked for a critically thinking elite of educated radicals, of the type summed up by the term "Nihilist". The *Russkoe slovo* presented positivist and scientific ideas, a blend of realism, utilitarianism, worship of the exact sciences and glorification of the educated classes. The nihilists refused to put their faith in the ruling classes or the peasants; they believed only in themselves and their reason. The most important task for them was the emancipation of the individual to increase the number of those who can think independently.

Such Jacobin and elitist currents in Russia led, for those strong-willed enough to follow the ideas to their conclusion, to terrorism. After the dissolution of *Zemlya i volya*, a new group, called simply the *Organisation*, came into being. Its leader, Nikolai Ishutin, had given up his studies, and advised his followers to do the same in order to devote themselves to the people. They attempted to set up co-operatives and friendly societies among workers, artisans and students, and to start schools for the poor. However this appears to have been a scheme for recruiting revolutionaries.<sup>86</sup> The group opposed all liberal reforms, which might put off the revolution, in the belief that the assassination of the Tsar would spark a revolt, and a cell within the *Organisation* called "Hell" was designed to do just that. *Organisation* members also tried to infiltrate other groups, to secretly direct the revolution. However there were clashes within the group over the policy of assassination, with some

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<sup>85</sup> Venturi p.288

<sup>86</sup> Venturi p.335

members preferring a propagandist approach. When an assassination attempt was made in 1866 by Dmitrii Karakozov the resulting reaction stamped out any meaningful attempts to organise radical opinion for the next few years.

When activity did re-emerge in Russia it reflected the two strands of Populism that had grown up in the 1860s; the creation of a strong elite organisation to head a revolt, and the less dramatic spreading of knowledge and socialist ideas to create a popular movement. The first tendency was embodied in Sergei Nechaev. He appeared out of the student unrest of 1869 and with Tkachev wrote a programme calling for the creation of revolutionary "prototypes" and a tight disciplined organisation. The revolution was worked out to a timetable. Organisation would begin in the capitals, spread to the lesser towns, then to the peasants, timed to culminate in February 1870 when relations between landlord and peasant finally came to an end and peasants had to pay for their land. Nechaev went to Switzerland and, passing himself off as the head of a powerful secret society, joined forces with Bakunin. Here he wrote the *Catechism of the Revolutionary*, a document often attributed to Bakunin, but, as R. Saltman points out, one whose Machiavellism, insistence on conspiracy and terrorism bear no resemblance to any of Bakunin's work; or to anarchism generally.<sup>87</sup> Following the murder of the student Ivanov, whom Nechaev suspected of treachery, he once more fled abroad, where Bakunin broke with him and his "Jesuitical schemes".<sup>88</sup> Eventually he was arrested and handed over to the Russian authorities, and spent the rest of his life in prison.

At the same time another group was gathering in St. Petersburg around Mark Natanson. In opposition to Nechaev this group, based around a student commune, aimed to gather information about the peasants and workers, to develop themselves morally and educationally in *kruzhki* and set up an organisation to distribute socialist books. In this they were joined by a group of

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<sup>87</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.131

<sup>88</sup> The reference here is to the authoritarian constitution of the Jesuit order, which demanded total obedience. Jesuits were accused by their enemies, religious and political, of teaching that "the end justifies the means" (the end being conversion to Catholicism), also an accusation which was levelled at Nechaev. Furthermore, the word "jesuitical" was used as a pejorative term at the time, with connotations of deceitfulness, dissembling and equivocation.

women students around Sof'ya Perovskaya. This group was to become the Chaikovskii circle, and was to take on a far more radical tinge than its beginnings would lead one to believe, as they moved from distributing legal texts to founding an illegal press and propagandising directly among workers and peasants across European Russia. This group's emphasis on decentralisation and the building of a conscious popular movement echoed Bakunin's ideas; and their demise marked the beginning of Russian radicalism's shift towards a more political movement.

It can be seen that socialism in Russia exhibited a number of parallels with anarchism in Europe, although until the 1870s these remained ideological and theoretical rather than practical. Due to the economic conditions prevailing in Russia, socialists looked above all to the peasants for revolution; the working class was as yet too small numerically to be considered a force for change without the support of the peasant masses. Like the anarchists they looked to the poor and oppressed generally and assigned no special role to the workers. Furthermore they largely rejected politics and political struggle until late in the 1870s, and some adopted the anarchist programme of insurrectionism, although these were for now a minority. The circles they organised were of an informal and non-hierarchical nature; in reply to the ideas of Nechaev this became a conscious effort in order to repudiate any attempts at "jesuitism". However by the end of the 1860s socialism in Russia was still ill-defined and its tendencies had yet to achieve the definitions which had been clarified in Europe within the International. Over the course of the next decade the lines would be drawn more sharply; and as the debates within the populist movement became clearer, so its relationship with anarchism and the debates within and around the anarchist movement can be traced, and thus, I hope, its place in the broader context of the European socialist movement appraised.

## **Chapter One: Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin**

### **1: Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to examine the life and, more particularly, the ideas of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin. After a look at the main trends in the historiography and biography of Bakunin, we shall move on to an examination of his early life and ideas, including his supposed Pan-Slavism, up to the point of his escape from Siberia and attempt to participate in the Polish insurrection of 1863. The remainder of the chapter will be divided into three sections: the first dealing with the development of Bakunin's mature collectivist anarchism and his efforts to propagate this anarchism in Italy, Spain and France, in the League for Peace and Freedom, and in the International Workingmen's Association; the second section will deal with Bakunin's dispute with Marx, with the focus on the political rather than the personal nature of the split. The necessity of such an examination will become clear in subsequent chapters when we compare the disputes within the populist movement on organisational and tactical forms, and the parallels with the Marxist/anarchist debate in the socialist movement in Europe become clear. Finally the third section (no pun intended) will deal with Bakunin's attempts to influence the movement in Russia, looking in particular at his relationship with Sergei Nechaev, Peter Lavrov, the students in Zurich, and his "Statism and Anarchy" which was smuggled into Russia and influenced groups such as the Chaikovskii circle as well as the movement "to the people" of 1874.

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin is a controversial and apparently contradictory figure in the history of anarchism and of Russian revolutionary thought. Like Kropotkin after him he threw over the comfort of a landowner's life to live on a shoestring in Europe, dedicating himself to social revolution and the destruction of the State. He adapted the economic materialism of Marx and the atheism of Feuerbach into a "scientific" anarchism, and used this system to attack the rule of science. He regarded reason as the key to progress, yet developed a cult of spontaneity. He attacked all forms of institutionalised authority, but retained a penchant for secret societies and



"invisible dictatorships".<sup>1</sup> He is vilified by Marxists for splitting the First International, praised by anarchists (and others) for the accuracy of his predictions about state communism made almost fifty years before the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>2</sup> Until recently he has been largely dismissed as hopelessly contradictory and inconsistent, a view which fails to account for his actual impact on European socialism.<sup>3</sup> He has been described by serious authors as "cracked",<sup>4</sup> and showing "hints of derangement"<sup>5</sup> while more recent authors have presented him as a consistent thinker presenting a challenging critique of modern social forms and of Marxism.<sup>6</sup>

## **2: Bakunin in Historiography**<sup>7</sup>

On the whole Bakunin has been viewed negatively by historians and biographers. He has been portrayed variously as an inconsistent and unsystematic thinker, an authoritarian, a man obsessed with violence, random destruction and terrorism, and proponent of an ahistorical volitional view of revolution.<sup>8</sup> This portrayal is largely false, as we shall see, and cannot account for Bakunin's impact on the European socialist movement of the nineteenth century. (It should be borne in mind that when the First International famously split, the majority of its federations and sections sided with Bakunin and his followers in the Jura Federation against Marx and the General Council.) Nevertheless there are some possible explanations for the

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<sup>1</sup> P. Marshall *Demanding the Impossible* London 1992 p.263

<sup>2</sup> See M. Bakunin *Statism and Anarchy* Cambridge 1990 pp.178-181

<sup>3</sup> R. Saltman *The Social and Political Thought of Mikhail Bakunin* Connecticut 1983 p.3

<sup>4</sup> E. Wilson *To the Finland Station* Garden City 1953 p. 279

<sup>5</sup> P. Avrich *The Russian Anarchists* Princeton 1971 p.27

<sup>6</sup> See R. Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...*; R. Cutler (ed.) *Bakunin: From Out of the Dustbin* Ann Arbor 1985 introduction.

<sup>7</sup> A number of biographies of Bakunin are available in English: E.H. Carr *Michael Bakunin* New York 1961; E. Pyziur *The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin* Milwaukee 1955; A.P. Mendel *Michael Bakunin: Roots of Apocalypse* New York 1981; A. Kelly *Michael Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* Oxford 1982. Chapters on Bakunin are an essential part of most works on anarchism: G. Woodcock *Anarchism* n.p. 1962; P. Marshall *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism* London 1993; P. Avrich *The Russian Anarchists* Princeton 1971. Several anthologies are also available: S. Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* New York 1971; A. Lehning *Selected Writings of Michael Bakunin* New York 1973; R. Cutler *Bakunin: From Out of the Dustbin* Ann Arbor 1985; G.P. Maximoff *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* New York 1964. R. Saltman's *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* Westport 1983 is a study of Bakunin's anarchist ideas; finally the International Institute for Social History has published seven volumes to date of the *Archives Bakounine* Leiden 1961-1981.

<sup>8</sup> See, eg., J. Joll *The Anarchists* London 1979 p.67; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.1; Pyziur *The Doctrine of Anarchism...* p.5; Marshall *Demanding...* p.272-3

general misinterpretation of Bakunin. The first is the incomplete form of almost all his work. Most of his writings remained as unfinished and unedited first drafts, and as such contain errors and confusions, break off in mid-sentence or wander off the point into digressions.<sup>9</sup> Second is the fact that Bakunin did not become an anarchist until the 1860s, and much of his earlier work has been seen in the light of his later anarchism.<sup>10</sup> We leave it to the judgement of the reader to assess a further explanation put forward by Bakunin himself: "an educated bourgeois, satisfied with his own position, could never understand the idea and necessity of social revolution...as life has not generated within him the strivings that correspond to the social revolutionary idea."<sup>11</sup>

Many authors have sought the source of Bakunin's apparent contradictions and doctrine of violence in an unstable personality.<sup>12</sup> Yet they are equally assured that the source of his influence was that same personality; he had "great charisma and personal magnetism"<sup>13</sup> and "few rivals in his ability to compel the admiration and confidence of new acquaintances."<sup>14</sup> This focus on Bakunin's personality has led to a tendency towards "psycho-history" in his biographers, and an extrapolation of Bakunin's deficient personality into anarchism and anarchists generally, claiming that the liberatory rhetoric conceals authoritarianism and potential dictatorship. For James Joll, the conclusion is that anarchism is a result of the need simply to react violently against the existing order, to fulfil a religious-heretical need.<sup>15</sup> Eugene Pyziur expands from Bakunin's "authoritarian" temperament to find the origins of Bolshevism in him,<sup>16</sup> probably, as Saltman says, revealing his own personal motives in so doing.<sup>17</sup> Most explicit among the psycho-

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<sup>9</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.4

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g. Pyziur *Doctrine* pp. 21-43; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.24 ("his aggressive rhetoric emerges in the 1830s")

<sup>11</sup> Bakunin *Statism and Anarchy* p.204

<sup>12</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* pp.1-15; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* passim; Carr *Michael Bakunin* p.112; Marshall *Demanding...* p.272

<sup>13</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.263

<sup>14</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* p.7

<sup>15</sup> J. Joll *The Anarchists* New York 1966 p.49

<sup>16</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* p.147

<sup>17</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.15

historians is Arthur Mendel, who claims that no other book on Bakunin took seriously enough his threat to freedom<sup>18</sup> (by which he means the democratic system). In setting out to discover the relationship of Bakunin's "violence and authoritarianism" to his defence of freedom by a psychological study, Mendel hopes to provoke a "shock of recognition" in those who share Bakunin's inclinations.<sup>19</sup>

Mendel uses Freudian analysis of Bakunin's papers to attempt to show that his destructive response to the world was the result of an oedipal complex and pathological narcissism.<sup>20</sup> The argument in general terms is that Bakunin needed to avoid power and responsibility whilst at the same time appearing to be powerful to mask his impotence; thus he adopted a series of roles which were in essence "aggressive withdrawal" from society. Early on, Fichte provided this in a philosophy of the inner life; later, left Hegelian dialectics offered the chance to withdraw from and attack society; anarchism was a retreat from political involvement which looked like militant engagement; and his roles in failed insurrections were attempts to appear the fearless leader without any real chance of victory. The question of why so many in the socialist movement accepted his views is answered thus: "countless others in search of the same self-deceptions mistook them for reality".<sup>21</sup>

There are a number of problems with the psycho-historical approach, particularly in the explicit form which Mendel uses. Whether or not Bakunin had psychological problems, to imply that everyone who has held or holds anarchist views suffers from similar problems is clearly facile. Moreover, the suggestion that they could be treated for their "disorder" is thoroughly sinister,<sup>22</sup> and one might argue, turning the tables, that this reveals the ultimately authoritarian nature of Mendel's liberalism.<sup>23</sup> Readers will no doubt

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<sup>18</sup> Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.1

<sup>19</sup> Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.3

<sup>20</sup> Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.28

<sup>21</sup> Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p 423

<sup>22</sup> Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.435

<sup>23</sup> See Dr. Alex Comfort's *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State* London 1950 for an argument that rather than anarchism, it is the modern state which is a haven for the maladjusted, in that

be familiar with the concept of "self" and "other", whereby a dominant culture (or race/gender/sexual orientation) will view itself as "normal" and place others outside of what is normal. This is clearly a feature of the psycho-historical approach, in that many of the historians mentioned above, based in the dominant liberal political culture, have sought to discover *what was wrong* with Bakunin personally (and by extension, anarchists generally) to make him advocate the destruction of the existing political/social order. Thus the approach probably reveals as much about the historian as the subject. Finally, while it is not necessarily intrinsic to a biographical/psychological approach, many historians have been guilty of ignoring the historical and political context in which Bakunin operated, thus limiting and at times distorting what can be learned from a study of the man and his ideas. Even a sympathetic author like George Woodcock attributes Bakunin's dispute with Marx to personal differences,<sup>24</sup> while Pyziur sees in his proposed secret societies the basis of Lenin's revolutionary cadres, perhaps forgetting the political conditions in which revolutionary groups of the time had to operate.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, it is common for historians hostile to Bakunin to make extensive use of the least reliable of Bakunin's documents: his *Confession* to Nicholas I, written in the Peter Paul Fortress, despite doubts over how far it is a sincere expression of belief and how far an attempt at deception in order to obtain better prison conditions,<sup>26</sup> and the *Catechism of the Revolutionary*, whose authorship cannot even be attributed to Bakunin with any certainty.<sup>27</sup>

Other historians have however tried to place Bakunin in a broader context, attempting to trace the genesis and influence of his ideas on socialism in Europe and Russia. Franco Venturi gives Bakunin a chapter in his encyclopaedic study of Russian populism,<sup>28</sup> although the focus of this chapter is on his early "Slavist" period, which is consistent with Venturi's

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it attracts aggressive personalities with a pathological desire to dominate others, especially in political parties and enforcement agencies such as the police.

<sup>24</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.158

<sup>25</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* p.130

<sup>26</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* pp.96ff.; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.246

<sup>27</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* pp. 85-93. The matter of Bakunin's association with Nechaev, and the authorship of the *Catechism*, will be discussed below.

<sup>28</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 ch.2

approach of studying the Russian revolutionary movement separately from that in Western Europe. Max Nettlau on the other hand, almost exclusively among historians of anarchism, does not give Bakunin a separate chapter in his *Short History of Anarchism*, evidently finding him impossible to separate from the movement itself in various countries.<sup>29</sup> Richard Saltman tries to shift the focus away from Bakunin's personality altogether to study his ideas in their intellectual context, presenting his anarchism as a coherent philosophy and system of critique.<sup>30</sup> However while Saltman examines in detail Bakunin's critique of Marxism, he does not examine his influence on Russia, thus committing the opposite offence to Venturi of leaving the Russian revolutionary movement out of a study of the European.

In view of the above, and in keeping with the aims of this thesis discussed in the Introduction, in this chapter I intend to study Bakunin's ideas in the context of the European anarchist movement, the broader socialist movement, (in particular the International) and the Russian movement as represented by the political émigrés in Switzerland who were Bakunin's only point of physical contact with socialism in Russia.

### **3: Early Life and Ideas**

#### **3-1: Philosophical Studies**

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin was born in 1814 on the estate of Premukhino in Tver' province, one of ten children. His father, a merchant, was a cautious liberal of the eighteenth-century school. As a disciple of Rousseau he made sure that his children's education was well taken care of, and Bakunin learned French, German, Italian and English at an early age, a fact which was to prove invaluable in later life. After what seems to have been a fairly idyllic and untroubled youth, he was sent to the Artillery school in St. Petersburg where he was a reluctant student, as a result of which he was posted to remote garrisons in Grodno and Minsk. Boredom and resentment of discipline led him to return home, "malingering convincingly"<sup>31</sup> and get himself discharged. He set off for Moscow in 1836 to teach and study philosophy and

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<sup>29</sup> M. Nettlau *A Short History of Anarchism* London 1996 passim

<sup>30</sup> Saltman *Social and Political Thought...*

<sup>31</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.137

discovered the works of the Romantics and German metaphysicists, in particular Fichte and Hegel, and he joined the circle of Stankevich. His letters of this time are full of Hegelian terms<sup>32</sup> and he became the *de facto* leader of the Moscow Hegelians, applying Hegel to the political world of Nicholas I, and also collaborating with Belinskii. At this stage, as a disciple of Hegel, Bakunin seems to have been somewhat conservative politically, in terms of being uncritical of autocracy, for which Belinskii attacked him. Whilst in Fichte Bakunin found the exultation of retreat from the real world and development of the inner life of the spirit, through Hegel Bakunin tried to reconcile himself with the outside world and tsarist Russia as it was, on the basis that "the real is the rational". This was a philosophy he would later criticise as condemning its adherents to do in the real world what was the opposite of their metaphysical ideal, and as a philosophical justification for the Prussian state.<sup>33</sup> Despite this conservatism however, Bakunin still found the intellectual atmosphere of Tsarist Russia stifling and in 1840 broke with his circle and left for Berlin with a loan from Herzen to acquaint himself with German philosophy at first hand.

In Germany, Bakunin moved in Russian émigré and Left Hegelian circles and it was here that his ideas began to take on a more radical tinge. Alongside the so-called "Young Hegelians" like Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach, he began to develop a critique of Hegel which brought the master back down to earth with the idea that the real had to be made rational, a philosophical justification for revolution. In 1842 he published his first article in Arnold Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, "The Reaction in Germany", in which he extolled in Hegelian form the idea of revolution, presenting it as a negative and destructive force which dialectically becomes positive and creative on its triumph, creating a new heaven and earth.<sup>34</sup> The article is largely abstract and philosophical, but is nevertheless a call for revolution, critical of the "compromisers" or reformists who take an intermediate position between the

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<sup>32</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.40. The first work of Hegel's to appear in Russian was Bakunin's translation of his *Gymnasium Lectures*.

<sup>33</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.133

<sup>34</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.139

"negativists" (radicals) and "positivists" (conservatives).<sup>35</sup> It was an attempt to formulate a philosophy of political action against the existing order, although it predates Bakunin's study of socialist ideas. Its oft-quoted final sentence, "the passion for destruction is a creative passion"<sup>36</sup> is misused by commentators for whom it demonstrates the exclusively destructive spirit of Bakunin's anarchism; firstly, the article has nothing to do with anarchism, written as it was some twenty years before Bakunin fully assumed an anarchist position; secondly, as Saltman points out, the sentence has to be seen in its Hegelian context, and does not refer to physical destruction or bloodshed.<sup>37</sup> It is worth providing a slightly fuller quotation to illustrate the point:

The spirit of revolution is not subdued, it has only sunk into itself in order soon to reveal itself again as an affirmative, creative principle...we exhort the compromisers to open their hearts to the truth, to free themselves of their wretched and blind circumspection...Let us therefore trust the eternal Spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life.

The passion for destruction is a creative passion too.<sup>38</sup>

From this fuller quotation it is clear that the article is calling on the "compromisers" to accept the left-Hegelian idea that progress moves forward through the clash of opposites, and is not an anarchist summons to destroy.

Next Bakunin moved to Switzerland with the poet Georg Herwegh, where they created a nucleus of socialists and radicals. He met the German communist Wilhelm Weitling and seems to have been involved in his conspiracies.<sup>39</sup> At any rate Bakunin was impressed by him, although he criticised him for ignoring the spiritual side of life.<sup>40</sup> Weitling preached a form of primitive Christianity which predicted the Kingdom of God on earth, and wrote the first communist programme for a secret society called The League

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<sup>35</sup> "The Reaction in Germany" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.56

<sup>36</sup> "The Reaction in Germany" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.57

<sup>37</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.12

<sup>38</sup> "The Reaction in Germany" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.56-57

<sup>39</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.140

<sup>40</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.269

of the Just. When Weitling was arrested and his movement crushed, Bakunin was found to be connected with him and in 1844 was summoned home by the Russian government. He refused and was condemned *in absentia* to exile with hard labour. Moving on to Paris he counted among his friends virtually all the German émigré and French Left. He met both Marx and Proudhon, and felt that the latter understood freedom better than the former. He was involved with the group trying to convert the journal *Vorwärts* into a socialist organ - Ruge, Marx, Herwegh and Heine - and also became friends with Proudhon. The years he spent in Paris from 1844-1847 were fruitful ones in terms of Bakunin's revolutionary development. His revolutionism now began to be shaped as he tried to build a socialism free of the despotic elements he saw in Weitling and the Germans. He remained something of an idealist in philosophical terms, however, not yet familiar with materialism and the study of economics as a basis for socialism. Meanwhile the arrival of Herzen and Belinskii in Paris signalled a parting of ways in Russian radicalism, with Belinskii hoping for a Westernising movement with realisable goals, while Herzen, disappointed with what he saw in the West, aimed at a move to socialism. He was joined in this by Bakunin.

Bakunin later gave the following account of his relations with Marx and Proudhon in this period:

As far as learning was concerned, Marx was, and still is, incomparably more advanced than I. I knew nothing at the time of political economy, I had not yet rid myself of my metaphysical aberrations, and my socialism was only instinctive...It was precisely at this time that he was elaborating the foundations of his system as it stands today...I greatly respected him for his learning and for his passionate devotion - though it was always mixed with vanity - to the cause of the proletariat.[...]

Marx as a thinker is on the right path. He has established the principle that juridical evolution in history is not the cause but the effect of economic development, and



this is a great and fruitful concept...On the other hand, Proudhon understood and felt liberty much better than he. Proudhon, when not obsessed with his metaphysical doctrine, was a revolutionary by instinct...Quite possibly Marx could construct a more rational system of liberty, but he lacks the instinct of liberty - he remains from head to foot an authoritarian.<sup>41</sup>



In spite of the opposing positions in which Marx and Bakunin were eventually to find themselves when Bakunin came to expound his collectivist anarchism in the International, Bakunin always acknowledged his intellectual debt to Marx, and their materialist analyses of economics did not differ substantially. Where they would come to differ was in the political conclusions they drew from that analysis.<sup>42</sup>

### 3-2: "Revolutionary Pan-Slavism"

It was not until 1847 that Bakunin became actively involved in a revolutionary movement, with attempts to establish ties with Polish nationalists, envisaging an East European revolution. On the occasion of the 17th anniversary of the Polish insurrection of 1830, he gave a speech to Polish émigrés asserting the need to overthrow Nicholas I. In his speech Bakunin dismissed the idea of a Polish-Russian alliance against Austria; how, he asked, could the oppressed Poles ally with their oppressor? Instead he called for an alliance of Poles with the oppressed Russian people against the autocracy.<sup>43</sup> This repudiation by a Russian of the Russian government, and the call for the deliverance of all the Slavs was enthusiastically received by the Polish émigrés; at this stage however Bakunin's revolutionism appeared democratic rather than socialist. Nevertheless, in spite of his attempts to ally with the Polish nationalists, he was already thinking in international terms, in hoping that a Polish revolution would spread to Russia,

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<sup>41</sup> J. Guillaume "Mikhail Bakunin: A Biographical Sketch" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.26-27

<sup>42</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.81

<sup>43</sup> "On the 17th Anniversary of the Polish Insurrection of 1830" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.59-60

and from Russia, via the Slavs under the Austrian yoke, to Europe. This theme is expanded in his *Appeal to the Slavs* to which we shall return below.

This activity led the Russian government to request and obtain his expulsion from France. They also started the rumour, which dogged him in later years, that he was a spy.<sup>44</sup> He went to Brussels, where he worked with democrats on the eve of 1848, and clashed with Marx and Engels. He again tried to establish contact with the Poles but with the revolution he returned to Paris, where he lodged with the soldiers of the National Guard. As the revolutionary tide ebbed he set off for Poland, but was intercepted by the German police and diverted to Breslau, where once again he contacted Polish refugees, although nothing came of the liaison.

The next chance for action came later in the year of 1848 with the calling of a Slav Congress in Prague. However Bakunin's revolutionary-democratic hopes for a federal union of European republics did not correspond to the mood of the Congress. While the Southern Slavs looked to the Tsar to save them from the Turks, the Czechs and Croats hoped to take over from the Germans as the "master race" in the Habsburg Empire.<sup>45</sup> Neither group seemed to be calling for the dismantling of the great Empires of the mid-nineteenth century, which Bakunin hoped for. In spite of this disappointment, Bakunin fought on the barricades when a rising broke out in Prague on the last day of the Congress. When after a few days it was put down, he escaped to the Duchy of Anhalt.

From the disappointments of the 1848 revolutions came Bakunin's *Appeal to the Slavs* in which he attempted to link national revolutions to internationalism and what he then understood as social revolution. It is largely on this document, and on a draft of a work on conditions in Russia written the following year, that the idea of Bakunin as "revolutionary Pan-Slavist" is based.<sup>46</sup> For Venturi, when Bakunin, along with Herzen, turned his attention to

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<sup>44</sup> This rumour was used on more than one occasion by Marx to discredit Bakunin, along with accusations of financial unreliability.

<sup>45</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.143

<sup>46</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.55. Venturi puts the emphasis on the adjective rather than the noun however. Dolgoff entitles the first section of his anthology "Revolutionary Pan-Slavism"; Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.53. Pyziur claims that Bakunin fought in 1848-9 under the ensign of revolutionary Pan-

Russian problems, he arrived at a vision of the Russian peasant masses, the *obshchina* and the capacity for revolution contained in the Russian villages and the life of the intelligentsia which was the germ of Populism - a belief in a peasant revolution supported by those members of the intelligentsia who were capable of defending the interests and traditions of the peasants.<sup>47</sup> While it is certainly true that the peasant/intelligentsia fusion was one of the defining features of later populism, it is perhaps somewhat misleading to single out Bakunin's early writings on the situation of Slavs and Russians, and put them at the root of a separate, Russian, revolutionary tradition. This is not to deny that such ideas did influence the Russian revolutionaries; but it must be borne in mind that what Bakunin was trying to do at this time was to create an international revolution, and his ideas must be seen in the broader context of the European situation in 1848-9.

The *Appeal to the Slavs* was in essence a call for the breakup of the Austrian and Russian Empires. In it, Bakunin appealed to the Slavic democrats to choose between the two camps of revolution and counter-revolution. "On the choice you make hangs the fate of other peoples who long for emancipation."<sup>48</sup> In view of the defeats for the revolutionary cause suffered in France and Germany, Bakunin called on the Slavs not to choose the path of compromise or diplomacy to try to achieve partial improvements which would leave the Austrian and Russian Empires, bulwarks of reaction, intact. This was the politics of monarchs and aristocrats, whose fall was being prepared by "all of us who are animated by the spirit of youth and of the future, all those who will joyfully grasp the hands of the democrats of all countries, so that we may together, closely united, fight for the common good, for the future of all peoples."<sup>49</sup> Bakunin was calling not for a specifically Slavic revolution, but for the Slavs to support the Europe-wide revolution whose future hung in the balance at that time; for "the dissolution of the Prussian Empire...the dissolution of the Empire of Austria...the dissolution of the

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Slavism; Pyziur *Doctrine* p.33. Engels attacked the pamphlet in an article entitled "Democratic Panslavism".

<sup>47</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.62

<sup>48</sup> "Appeal to the Slavs" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.63

Turkish Empire...and finally the dissolution of that last stronghold of despotism...the Russian Empire...dissolution, overturn and regeneration in the entire North and East of Europe, a free Italy, and as the last result, the Universal Federation of European Republics."<sup>50</sup>

Bakunin then did not look eastward for revolution for any reason other than to give motive force to the international democratic revolution against the Empires. His article of 1849 on Russian conditions, which extolled the *obshchina* and the radical youth of Russia should be seen in the light of this internationalism, and not as the basis for an exclusively Russian or Slav movement. Rather than a "vision of Russia's future",<sup>51</sup> the article should be seen as an attempt to convince its European audience that Russia was not a strong united power, but that there was revolutionary potential and deep class conflict there, to which the European revolutionaries should extend their hand, since it was vital that none of the fortresses of reaction be left standing. The attention paid in this article to the Russian peasants, and his call for a federation of Slavic states are not therefore evidence of Pan-Slavism, revolutionary or otherwise, as Peter Marshall claims,<sup>52</sup> nor the basis for a specifically Russian populism as Venturi suggests, but part of an attempt to unite the forces of revolution across Europe against those of reaction, to stiffen their resolve and to discourage the sort of timid compromises which had led to the Frankfurt parliament becoming the "laughing stock of Europe".<sup>53</sup>

However, the orientation of these publications towards "the people", or the labouring classes, of the various nations as the force for democratic revolutions should be noted. What Bakunin, and indeed many other revolutionaries, took from the experience of 1848-9 was an abiding mistrust of the bourgeoisie as revolutionaries. In France, the suppression of the June insurrection in Paris, and the dismal performance of the parliament of Frankfurt showed Bakunin that the bourgeois radicals sought power only for

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<sup>49</sup> "Appeal to the Slavs" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.65

<sup>50</sup> "Appeal to the Slavs" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.66-67

<sup>51</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.59

<sup>52</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.271

themselves. If the revolution were to be truly liberating, it would have to have the force of the people behind it. Thus in the *Appeal* Bakunin addresses the social question alongside that of the independence of nations. Liberty, he wrote, had up to now been a lie, an underprop for the powerful and the rich. The social revolution, the great question raised by "the admirable instinct of the peoples" therefore appears as a necessary corollary to the political revolution.<sup>54</sup> This turn towards the working classes and the peasants as the hope for the future revolution, and his abiding mistrust of bourgeois radicalism, remained at the heart of Bakunin's later anarchism. This already represents a difference with Marx, for whom the events of 1848-9, especially in France, proved the reactionary nature of the peasants, and confirmed the urban proletariat, in collaboration with radical elements of the bourgeoisie, as the truly revolutionary class.<sup>55</sup> For Marx, the peasants displayed their reactionary nature in their support for Napoleon III, whereas Bakunin both rejected the bourgeoisie, and included the peasants in the revolutionary class. For one thing, the necessity of destroying the Russian Empire meant that Bakunin had to believe in a revolutionary peasantry; for another, he felt that the non-involvement of the peasants in the 1848 revolution was the basic reason for their support for Napoleon. They rejected a revolution which was not made in their interests.

When revolution broke out in Dresden in 1849, Bakunin again took part enthusiastically, and was apparently a "capable and cool-headed leader" on the barricades.<sup>56</sup> Again however, the revolution was crushed and this time Bakunin was arrested. He was imprisoned by first the Saxons then the Austrians, sentenced to death by both, a sentence which was commuted, before finally being handed over to Russia, where he was dispatched to the Peter-Paul fortress without trial. He remained in prison for eight years. Whilst in prison Bakunin aged considerably, contracted scurvy and lost his teeth. He

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<sup>53</sup> "Appeal to the Slavs" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.67. The Frankfurt parliament, set up in 1848, had hoped to unite Germans under a constitutional monarchy, but the king of Prussia refused the crown offered him and the parliament found itself ignored as reaction set in.

<sup>54</sup> "Appeal to the Slavs" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.68

<sup>55</sup> See K. Marx "18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in, *inter alia*, D. McClellan (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* Oxford 1977 pp.317-323

also wrote his *Confession*.<sup>57</sup> This extraordinary document, in essence a plea for forgiveness from Nicholas I, has been interpreted as a ploy to get out of prison, the result of severe disappointment in the failures of 1848-9, or an abject betrayal of his beliefs, depending largely on the interpreter's opinion of Bakunin.<sup>58</sup> All in all it is an unreliable, although fascinating, document, and should be used with caution. Pyziur, for example, who refers to the *Confession* on several occasions as evidence, seizes on paragraphs describing revolutionary dictatorship as presaging Bakunin's later anarchist strategies, a position which can be criticised in three ways: firstly, it is a misinterpretation of the organisation and role of Bakunin's later, anarchist, secret societies; secondly, it ignores the possibility of influence on the pre-anarchist Bakunin of the Babeuf-Buonarroti-Blanqui tradition of conspiratorial revolution; and thirdly it ignores the possibility that Bakunin may simply have been making it up, inventing sins of which to repent in order to ease his harsh prison conditions.<sup>59</sup> Marshall makes a basic error in his use of the *Confession*: in quoting a passage which he says displays Bakunin's "voluntarism", his belief that "faith alone is half of success",<sup>60</sup> he neglects to note that Bakunin was admitting that this belief was mistaken, that in the absence of any money or contacts whilst trying to start a rebellion in Bohemia, he had told himself that faith alone could be enough.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Marshall also uses this, and other, statements from the pre-anarchist *Confession* to comment on Bakunin's anarchism.<sup>62</sup>

Whatever Bakunin's motives in writing the *Confession*, it did him little good and he remained in prison. Eventually in 1857 his family appealed to the

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<sup>56</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.271

<sup>57</sup> Available in English as *The Confession of Michael Bakunin* Ithaca/London 1977

<sup>58</sup> For Mendel the *Confession* is an honest and forthright statement of apology to the father-figure of the tsar; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.246. For Marshall it is a combination of cunning ruse and outright betrayal of beliefs, mitigated by the despair which a gregarious man of action felt as a solitary prisoner; Marshall *Demanding...* p.273. For Woodcock, attempts to apologise are negated by descriptions of oppression in Russia, so the ruse failed; Woodcock *Anarchism* p.146. For B. Koz'min, the *Confession* was the result of despondency over the failure of the 1848-9 struggles, and for Yurii Steklov, it was in its entirety an attempt at deceit; *Confession* pp.22-23

<sup>59</sup> Pyziur *Doctrine* p.97

<sup>60</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.273

<sup>61</sup> *Confession* pp.79-80

<sup>62</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* pp.272, 273

new tsar Alexander II in direct fashion to ease Bakunin's suffering, and he was offered permanent exile in Siberia, which he readily accepted. Whilst in Siberia he married a young Polish woman. He spent a further four years in Siberia before escaping on an American ship after getting a job as a merchant's agent. After a round-the-world journey he landed up in Herzen's house in London at the end of 1861.

#### **4: Western Europe and Revolutionary Anarchism**

##### **4-1: The Growth of Bakuninist Anarchism**

Collaboration with Herzen was short-lived. Differences in temperament and policy pushed the two men apart. They differed for example in their reactions to the Polish rebellion of 1863; Herzen and Ogarev pleaded for it to be postponed, while Bakunin was eager for action and joined an ill-fated expedition in order to take part. The expedition got no further than Sweden. In their reactions to its defeat, the two men differed also: Bakunin's hopes for national liberation movements declined in favour of more radical social-revolutionary ideas, while Herzen became more cautious, assured of the destructiveness of inadequately prepared actions.<sup>63</sup> From his involvement with Polish exiles, Bakunin produced a pamphlet in which he attacked the rising's aristocratic currents, its nationalist desire for a greater Poland and its opposition to land reform,<sup>64</sup> in other words, its purely political character.

Following the disappointment of the Polish rising, Bakunin went to Italy where discontent was growing against both the monarchy and Mazzini's republicans.<sup>65</sup> The three years he spent there were fruitful ones; his anarchism developed during this period, he organised his first societies, and helped secure the ascendancy of anarchism over both republicanism and Marxism in the Italian revolutionary camp. In Italy after the Risorgimento there existed an abyss between "real" and "legal" Italy; peasants, artisans and workers were impoverished, deprived of the vote and without legal redress. The democratic followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi meanwhile seemed more

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<sup>63</sup> N. Pirumova "Bakunin and Herzen: An Analysis of their Ideological Disagreements at the End of the 1860s" in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* Vol.10 No.4 1976 p.555

<sup>64</sup> T. Ravindranathan *Bakunin and the Italians* Kingston/Montreal 1988 p.17

concerned over the initial failure to capture Rome and Venetia than over poverty and property relations.<sup>66</sup> Carlo Pisacane, a former chief of staff of Garibaldi's army, wanted to turn the struggle against the rich and propertied generally, rather than Austria and the Bourbons, by means of a mass rising of the peasants. On the eve of the disastrous Sapri expedition of 1857 he had put forward the idea of "propaganda with deeds" which would later form part of anarchist strategy, and which may well have influenced Bakunin:

Propaganda of the idea is a chimera, the education of the people an absurdity. Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former, and the people will not be free when they are educated but educated when they are free.<sup>67</sup>

Bakunin by this time had combined his call for the revolution to be both international and social, outlined in his *Appeal to the Slavs*, with Proudhon's anti-statism, federalism and atheism. 1848 had convinced him of the reactionary nature of the bourgeoisie; it would have to be overthrown along with its institutions. He now looked to the landless peasants as a decisive force in revolution, along with workers and artisans, *déclassés* intellectuals and the lumpenproletariat. Although he had tried to contact Garibaldi and Mazzini in 1862 to propose joint actions, he turned against Garibaldi after the latter's homage to Queen Victoria on a visit to England in 1864.<sup>68</sup>

Bakunin's first port of call in Italy was Florence. Here he attempted to form an International Brotherhood. Details are sketchy on this group, and it is not clear if it did in fact become a functioning organisation, or if so, what it actually did. More success was had in Naples. In the mid-1860s, following the imposition of Piedmontese administration and law after unification, Naples was home to unrest, tax-evasion, rural agitations, disobedience, resistance to conscription and brigandage.<sup>69</sup> Bakunin made contact with democrats and republicans and produced a series of articles in the newspaper *Il popolo*

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<sup>65</sup> It appears he was asked by Marx to go as an agent of the newly-formed International, of which Bakunin was not as yet a member. Ravindranathan *Italians* p.27

<sup>66</sup> N. Pernicone *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* Princeton 1993 p.11

<sup>67</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.13

<sup>68</sup> Ravindranathan *Italians* p.20

<sup>69</sup> Ravindranathan *Italians* p.38



*d'Italia* on the workers' cause and on the necessity of economic equality for true liberty, since, he wrote, the liberty of each assumes the liberty of all, and there can be no real liberty without equality.<sup>70</sup> Bakunin appeared as the only man in Italy with the intellect and audacity to challenge Mazzini's tired formulas and try to convert his disaffected supporters to the social revolution. His articles in *Il Popolo* articulated central themes of Bakunin's emerging anarchism: liberty, economic equality, federalism, antistatism. Every organisation, he wrote, must be organised on federalist lines, "from the bottom to the top, and from the circumference to the centre."<sup>71</sup> He also looked for a "militant church of democracy" consisting of *déclassés* of the educated classes to add the "idea" to the revolutionary instinct and power of the popular masses.<sup>72</sup>

Bakunin's first Italian disciples included Giuseppe Fanelli, Carlo Gambuzzi and Saverio Friscia. Fanelli had headed the committee which had tried to support Pisacane's Sapri expedition with a rising in Naples. He was elected to parliament in 1865 but did not take his seat, instead using his government rail pass for revolutionary propaganda trips.<sup>73</sup> Other adherents had fought with Garibaldi or Mazzini, or in 1848. From this base, Bakunin now attacked both of these heroes, as well as gradualism and nationalism, and called for violent revolution against the church, state, and private property. The programme of this society, known as the Revolutionary Catechism, (which should not be confused with the *Catechism of the Revolutionary* which emerged from Bakunin's collaboration with Nechaev) outlines its anarchist principles: the freedom of each, realised in the equality of all; absolute rejection of every authority, order in society coming from liberty at the individual level, and at all levels of organisation. While recognising historical, geographical and economic differences which would affect organisational forms from place to place, certain conditions were essential everywhere for freedom: the abolition of state religions and of the influence of churches on

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<sup>70</sup> Ravindranathan *Italians* p.41

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* pp.18-19

<sup>72</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.19

<sup>73</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.20

education, abolition of monarchy, classes, ranks and privileges; sexual equality; the moral, political and economic dismantling of the state, judiciary, banks, bureaucracy, army and police.<sup>74</sup> The new society would be united by liberty, with each individual, commune, region and nation allowed to ally with, and secede from, whomever they wish. With the dissolution of unity imposed by violence, the units of society would be drawn together by inherent necessities.<sup>75</sup> Society as a whole would retain the right to censure anti-social individuals by depriving them of a say in the running of the social unit, or offering them the option of leaving. The basic unit would be the autonomous commune, which could join a provincial federation of communes formed by universally elected delegates, with no power to interfere in the internal running of communes. A nation would then be no more than a federation of autonomous provinces.<sup>76</sup> The revolution will be organised in the same way.

On the subject of equality, Bakunin does not mean levelling, but that all can have equal means for maintenance and education, and for the exercise of all their natural capacities and aptitudes. This leads on to the abolition of the right to inheritance, which upholds inequality of classes. Inequalities due to diverse amounts of energy or skill of individuals will never entirely disappear, and indeed are desirable, but under an egalitarian organisation and with no right of inheritance, their adverse effects will be minimised. Division of labour into manual and intellectual will cease; intelligent and free labour will be performed largely collectively in voluntarily organised productive associations, who will also own the land and means of production. The legal family will be abolished; pregnant and nursing women will be subsidised by the communal organisation, as will the elderly and infirm.<sup>77</sup>

As for anarchist tactics and organisation, the main point of Bakunin's Catechism is that the revolutionary alliance will be the germ of the future universal federation of peoples; particular interests must be set aside in the

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<sup>74</sup> "Revolutionary Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.77-78

<sup>75</sup> "Revolutionary Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.79

<sup>76</sup> "Revolutionary Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.85

<sup>77</sup> "Revolutionary Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp. 87-95

cause of solidarity.<sup>78</sup> The revolution has to be made by the people themselves, rural as well as urban. To defeat the combined forces of reaction, solidarity between revolutionary peoples is necessary, which means a common programme of social and economic revolution, co-ordinated by a secret organisation, and unified by simultaneous risings in cities and rural areas.<sup>79</sup> However the revolution must have a local character; that is to say, not focussed on a single centre (the capital, say) but bursting out from all parts of the country.<sup>80</sup> Thus Bakunin clearly believed that the revolution would be carried out by popular insurrection. He proposed that the rural and urban people confiscate all state property, burn deeds and debts and nullify every official document and record; the target of the insurrection had to be the resources, organisations and administrations of the state, not the individuals who controlled it. The revolution, like the society which would follow it, must have a local, and therefore federal character. Thus the local communes must, after overthrowing the established government, reorganise themselves in a revolutionary manner, electing their own administrations directly responsible to the people.<sup>81</sup> Finally, in order to prepare for the revolution, a strong, secret international association will be necessary. We shall return to this controversial theme below.

These ideas formed the basis of Bakunin's anarchism for the rest of his life. In Italy he tried to introduce these radical socialist and class struggle ideas to dissatisfied radicals and republicans, not without success. T. Ravindranathan claims that rather than absorbing anarchist ideas in Italy under the influence of Pisacane, it was Bakunin himself who introduced anarchism to Italy.<sup>82</sup> N. Pernicone on the other hand states that "the years in Italy laid the foundations for Bakunin's anarchism."<sup>83</sup> At the risk of seeming indecisive, it seems to me that both are partially true; it is difficult to assess exactly when Bakunin became an anarchist, but his attempt to participate in

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<sup>78</sup> "Revolutionary Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.96

<sup>79</sup> "National Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.99

<sup>80</sup> "National Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.100

<sup>81</sup> "National Catechism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.101

<sup>82</sup> Ravindranathan *Italians* p.74

<sup>83</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.15

the Polish insurrection might suggest that he was not completely an anarchist before going to Italy. On the other hand on arriving there he more or less immediately set about trying to form anarchist organisations; so perhaps Bakunin and the Italians simultaneously influenced one another in their search for the correct revolutionary formula. Whatever the truth, it is certainly the case that Bakunin's first anarchist writings emanate from Italy in the mid-1860s, and that he was intimately involved in the founding of Italian anarchism.

Bakunin left Italy in 1867, his anarchist ideas now more or less fully formed. Meanwhile, events in Italy and elsewhere continued to ensure that Bakuninism would be dominant among revolutionaries there. The influence of Mazzini was fading, and Bakunin did not miss any opportunity to attack him and Garibaldi. Defeat in the latest attempt to capture Rome in 1866 led the Bakuninists to produce pamphlets claiming that a free Italy could only be achieved by the peasants and workers rising in the name of Justice and rejecting Mazzini's class cooperation and gradualism.<sup>84</sup> The call for class war and revolution went down well in 1868 as peasants in the North rose against a new milling tax, while Mazzini failed to organise amongst workers. When the Paris Commune broke out in 1871, Mazzini attacked it furiously, equating it with Bakunin's ideas; this had the opposite effect to the one intended in that it raised the profile and prestige of Bakuninist anarchism in Italy.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Marx's and Engels' efforts to organise in Italy were sporadic and unenthusiastic. All of these factors ensured that the Italian sections which joined the International in 1869 were overwhelmingly Bakuninist.

Meanwhile in Spain Bakunin's influence was also spreading. Having formed his revolutionary Alliance of Social Democracy (of which more below), he sent a number of envoys to Spain on hearing of the exile of Queen Isabella in 1868. One of these was the Italian Giuseppe Fanelli, who, despite his inability to speak Spanish, managed to set up anarchist nuclei in Madrid and Barcelona.<sup>86</sup> Anarchism quickly made headway amongst the rural poor, in

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<sup>84</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.25

<sup>85</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.37

<sup>86</sup> Marshall *Demanding* p.454

particular the landless peasants and poor farmers of Andalucía and the Levante, among miners in Catalunya, and workers of Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona. Within a year and a half, Madrid alone had twenty-three International sections. At the first congress of the Spanish International in 1870, Francisco Mora pronounced that since "all political forms are types of authority in which well-being, peace and social harmony are impossible...we have opted for revolution leading to the social liquidation which we desire."<sup>87</sup> This was an acceptance of Bakunin's ideas of rejecting parliamentarism and diplomacy in favour of social revolution. The Spanish FRE (Federación Regional Española, the Spanish section of the International) relied mainly on strikes in the early 1870s, and its Federal Commission hoped to use information gathering to determine the best moment to call strikes, although in practice this rarely took place.<sup>88</sup> The Spanish anarchists embraced an early form of revolutionary syndicalism, which based itself in labour organisations using strikes to attack the capitalist system, with the ultimate aim of a general strike to bring it down. However, a mood of insurrectionism grew in the atmosphere of repression which followed the cantonalist risings of 1873. Strikes of course required a strong union or syndicate organisation, which was not possible when repressions set in. Taking advantage of the turmoil of 1873, anarchists in the South led rural workers in an insurrection in the town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, imprisoning the police and destroying property and tax records. The FRE remained in control of the town for a month, and even after its defeat by government troops, the insurrection, and other similar actions involving the anarchists, stood as a beacon ensuring popular support in the region, to the detriment of republicans, and encouraging the insurrectionist tactic for its inspirational and propaganda value.<sup>89</sup>

In 1867, Bakunin, having left Italy, became involved with the League for Peace and Freedom, a convocation of pacifist liberals whose warm welcome to him cooled as he expounded his views at their congress. It

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<sup>87</sup> M. Nettlau *La Première Internationale en Espagne* Dordrecht 1969 p.59

<sup>88</sup> G.R. Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology and the Working Class Movement in Spain 1868-1898* Berkeley 1989 p.52

<sup>89</sup> T. Kaplan *Anarchists of Andalusia* Princeton 1977 p.110

appears that Bakunin wanted to link the League with the International, to deal with political, religious and philosophical questions as the International dealt with the economic question.<sup>90</sup> At the 1868 congress, he developed Proudhon's mutualist ideas on associations into a principle of economic organisation; an end rather than a means of revolution. He made an address in which he attacked nationalism, Rousseau's theory of social contract, and the state in general.<sup>91</sup> The state, claimed Bakunin, is the most flagrant, the most cynical and the most complete negation of humanity; the history of states, a series of revolting crimes. Patriotism is the transcendent morality of the state whereby any crime, when committed for the greater glory of the state, is transformed into duty and virtue. Thus "there is no horror, cruelty, no sacrilege, or perjury, no imposture, no infamous transaction, no cynical robbery, no bold plunder or shabby betrayal that has not been or is not daily being perpetrated by the representatives of the states, under no other pretext than those elastic words, so convenient and yet so terrible: *for reasons of state*."<sup>92</sup>

#### 4-2: The International Workingmen's Association and the Split with Marx

##### 4-2a: Critique of Political Authority

Bakunin's proposals that peace and freedom could only be achieved through the dismantling of all states were not accepted by the League. Furthermore his proposal of an alliance between the League and the International (which Bakunin joined in 1868 via the Geneva section) was rejected by the General Council and by Marx who controlled it. Bakunin and his supporters withdrew from the League and formed the International Alliance of Social Democracy, and it was from this base that the influence of Bakuninist anarchism began to spread internationally. While Giuseppe Fanelli was converting the Spaniards to the cause, Bakunin was applying for his Alliance to be allowed entry to the International as an organisation. This was refused; Marx and the General Council feared that a separate international

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<sup>90</sup> Letter to Gustave Vogt in J. Guillaume *L'Internationale: Documents et souvenirs* 4 vols in 2 New York 1969 v.1 pt.1 p.73

<sup>91</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p.279

<sup>92</sup> "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.133-134

organisation within the International would be divisive.<sup>93</sup> Bakunin however saw the existence of the Alliance within the International as a necessary complement; while the International would unite workers and provide them with socialist thought and consciousness, the Alliance would provide the revolutionary direction and co-ordination, in line with his proposal that a strong, secret society was necessary to unite the popular local risings when revolution eventually broke out. However, with the refusal of the General Council to admit the organisation, Bakunin formally dissolved it and its members joined the International separately.<sup>94</sup> Whether the Alliance continued a *de facto* existence within the International is a matter of dispute. Marx claimed that the Alliance continued to exist and was intended to undermine the General Council; James Guillaume said that it continued an informal existence.<sup>95</sup> Given Bakunin's view of the need for a secret society to unify revolutionary actions, it would be surprising if the Alliance did not continue some form of informal existence within the International. However this should be related to Bakunin's schema of simultaneous, local and federated popular insurrections, for which a secret co-ordinating body was necessary, rather than a narrow personal desire to unseat Marx and take control of the International.

With the addition of the new, Bakuninist sections of Spain and Italy, Bakunin's influence in the Jura region of Switzerland and in France, and the federalist socialism of César de Paepe in Belgium, a third strand was now added to the two main currents of socialism in the International, Proudhonist mutualism, and Marxist state communism. As the former declined in strength, there appeared basically two wings of the International; statist, and anti-statist or federalist. It might be easier to refer to these wings as Marxists and Bakuninists, but as we shall see, their differences transcended any personal rivalry and were based in very different conceptions of revolution, the state, organisation, the role of the various classes and involvement in bourgeois politics.

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<sup>93</sup> Resolution of the General Council in Guillaume *L'Internationale* v.1 pt.1 pp.103-104

<sup>94</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* v.1 pt.1 pp.120, 141

<sup>95</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* v.1 pt.1 p.132

To fully understand Bakunin's critique of Marx it is necessary to go "back to basics" as it were, to the philosophical roots of their ideas. Bakunin's critique of Marx rested on his critique of authority in general. As Richard Saltman says, his attack on Marx roughly mirrors Feuerbach's attack on Hegel's Absolute.<sup>96</sup> As the idea of the Absolute puts the essence of man outside of man, it is an abstraction which does not address the concerns of real sentient human beings. Bakunin's critique of political authority is similar. The Marxist state would, according to Bakunin, suffer from the same inadequacies as those Feuerbach attributed to Hegel's dialectic; that is, it would be an abstraction which would distort individuals for its own satisfaction and would thus impose external, artificial and dominant force on them.<sup>97</sup> Bakunin's conception of historical progress was linear rather than dialectic; change could be slow and apathetic, or powerful and sudden as in revolution, but essentially an evolutionary schema.<sup>98</sup> This schema focussed on man as a sentient being, not the object of an idea; a product of external physical nature, yet able to forge his own freedom within the bounds of natural laws, through natural influence and mutual interaction.<sup>99</sup>

For Bakunin there were two types of authority; one which was artificially imposed, served the interests of an elite, and was the negation of freedom; the other which was naturally inherent in the physical and social worlds, and was the basis of freedom. Human society is basically a subset of the natural world, in which every entity impacts on every other in a constant state of flux and mutual interaction.<sup>100</sup> Man can be free only in acknowledging the application of mutual interaction in society; "being free means being acknowledged, considered and treated as such by all".<sup>101</sup> In obeying natural laws man is not a slave, since he is obeying laws inherent in his own nature; no revolt is possible against this universal nature which "penetrates us to the

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<sup>96</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.24

<sup>97</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.25

<sup>98</sup> "God and the State" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.122

<sup>99</sup> "God and the State" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.30

<sup>100</sup> "L'Empire Knouto-germanique et la Révolution Sociale" in *Archives Bakounine VII* appendice pp.199-200

<sup>101</sup> Extract from "Knouto-Germanic Empire..." in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.147



marrow of our bones and to the depths of intellectual and moral being".<sup>102</sup> However, against man-made abstractions, such as God, or the state, rebellion is not only possible but necessary. God represents the abstraction or divinisation of human qualities outside of man; once created, God was proclaimed the cause, reason, arbiter and disposer of all things, and man became his slave. It was with this in mind that Bakunin, as a "jealous lover of human liberty", proclaimed that "if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him."<sup>103</sup>

In much the same way the state represents the abstraction of authority outside of, and above, society. It removes the natural authority inherent in mutual interaction, in physical and social laws which bound human freedom, and makes of it an instrument of political domination. Therefore, there cannot be a state without a ruling class; if a state exists it will be used by one group or another for its class benefit, because that is what it is for. If other classes have exhausted themselves, the state becomes the property of the bureaucratic class.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, any class in control of the state will try to perpetuate that control via economic exploitation, which supports the state and which the state in turn supports. The state also possesses an inherent tendency towards bureaucratisation and centralisation, due to the necessity of efficient means of control, which gives it the character of an impersonal machine.<sup>105</sup>

This critique applied to any state, monarchy, republic or the workers' or popular state advocated by Marxists, and it is the essence of Bakunin's attack on Marx in the first International. Bakunin argued that Marx, although incomparable in his study of capitalism, had retained abstract and authoritarian Hegelian metaphysics on which he based his political conclusions. The notion of the dialectical transformation of the state, which meant the seizure by the proletariat of state power, meant that the rise of despotic states, centralisation, the defeats of peasant revolts and so on were

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<sup>102</sup> Extract from "Knouto-Germanic Empire..." in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.208

<sup>103</sup> "God and the State" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.128

<sup>104</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.55

important events in the progress towards their opposite. This, for Bakunin, was evidence that Marx was more interested in abstract ideas than in real people.<sup>106</sup>

#### 4-2b: The State

Bakunin insisted that the new society had to be based on, and spring from, autonomous groups working freely together, a society organised from the bottom up. Bakunin opposed Marx's centralism, which was gathering power in the International at the expense of the autonomy of local sections. His opposition was based on his critique of political authority; for Bakunin, the very existence of powerful centralised institutions would encourage some group or other to use them for their own benefit. Basically, while for Marx the state was evil because it was run by and for the bourgeoisie, and could be used to positive advantage when in the hands of the workers' representatives, for Bakunin and the anarchists the state was evil *per se* and could only serve to institutionalise privilege.

For Bakunin, the only difference between a monarchy and a republic was in whose name the people were robbed. In a republic, a fictitious "legal nation" smothers real live people, and it is in the name of this abstract concept that the state claims to act. "No state, even the reddest political republic, is capable of giving the people what they need - the free organisation of their own interests from below upward...No state, not even the pseudo-popular state contemplated by Marx, in essence represents anything but government of the masses from above downward, by an educated and thereby privileged minority which supposedly understands the real interests of the people better than the people themselves."<sup>107</sup>

Thus Bakunin strongly opposed the idea of the seizure of state power by the proletariat, by revolutionary or parliamentary means. If there is a state, he wrote, there is *of necessity* domination by a ruling minority. To the hypothetical question of that ruling minority consisting of workers, he replies that they will be *former workers* who, having left the workplace to take up

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<sup>105</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.59

<sup>106</sup> Letter to *La Liberté* in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.254

<sup>107</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.24

office, will no longer represent the workers but themselves and their pretensions to govern the people.<sup>108</sup> And if they are learned and committed socialists, the result will be a despotic government by an aristocracy of intellectuals. He posed the question: if the state is a popular state, then why abolish it? And if it needs to be abolished, how dare they [Marxists] call it a popular state? Against the claim that a period of dictatorship was necessary to free the people, Bakunin argued that no dictatorship can have any object other than to perpetuate itself; liberty can be created only by liberty.<sup>109</sup> In a prophetic passage, Bakunin claimed that under the Marxist programme, the state, having been seized, would be strengthened and placed at the disposal of communist leaders, who would "concentrate all the reins of government in a strong hand, create a single state bank, concentrate in their own hands all commercial, agricultural, industrial and scientific production and divide the people into two armies, industrial and agrarian, under the direct control of state engineers who will form the new privileged scientific and political class."<sup>110</sup>

Obviously this critique applied to the International as much as to the state; a centralised and hierarchical International would create a new set of political leaders, in effect a ruling elite in waiting. The anti-authoritarian society could only be created through an anti-authoritarian revolutionary organisation.<sup>111</sup> Therefore Bakunin and his followers in the International opposed Marx's centralising policies, which would strengthen the General Council in order to turn the International into a unified political organ for the seizure of state power; they maintained the necessity of a federalist structure, with the sections autonomous, and the Council fulfilling an information-gathering, co-ordination and correspondence role.

#### 4-2c: Class

Like Proudhon, and unlike Marx, Bakunin and the anarchists included peasants, artisans and poorly-paid, unskilled workers in the revolutionary

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<sup>108</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.178

<sup>109</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.179

<sup>110</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.181

<sup>111</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.113

army, since they were in a more antagonistic position to the existing order than the upper levels of skilled, well-paid urban workers, whom the bourgeoisie had corrupted. Indifference, egoism and lack of energy could be observed in certain well-remunerated workers; they are semi-bourgeois by interest and by vanity, and are opposed to revolution because revolution would ruin them.<sup>112</sup> Bakunin recognised that the peasants would have to be won over from their often reactionary positions, however, he also claimed that often such positions were a reflection of their hatred for the *beaux Messieurs* and the bourgeois of the towns. Peasants supported Napoleon III because they saw in him an enemy of the bourgeoisie, thus an emperor of the peasants.<sup>113</sup> Their bonapartist superstitions, like their religious superstitions, could be dispelled in action, in destroying the administrative machine, and the influence of men who uphold the imperialist fanaticism.

Bakunin did not of course look exclusively to the peasants; the schema is not Marxists - workers, anarchists - peasants. Indeed, Bakunin accepted that the workers of the towns would probably take the initiative in revolution,<sup>114</sup> but he extended Marx's definition of the exploited class to include the peasants, and rejected the well-paid "labour aristocracy". He recognised that for a revolution to be successful, it was necessary for it to be made by the whole of the exploited people, not just the industrial proletariat. If the revolution were an exclusively urban affair, if the peasants were not involved, the result would be a campaign of forced collectivisation, of terror by the cities against the countryside, which would throw the peasants into the camp of reaction and result in civil war.<sup>115</sup> The necessity for regularly organised violence which this would entail would require a state, thus reconstituting the principle of authority and a privileged class of state functionaries, meaning the

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<sup>112</sup> "Lettre à un Français" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.21. This distinction was also raised by the Russian Populists, who in their memoirs claim a preference for the semi-peasant workers of the *fabriki* over the skilled and more urbanised *zavodskie*. See for example P. Kropotkin *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1970 p.326; for an in-depth discussion, see R. Zelnik "Populists and Workers" in *Soviet Studies* no3 1971 pp.251-269, and Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>113</sup> "Lettres à un Français sur la Crise Actuelle" (1870) in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.115

<sup>114</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.138

<sup>115</sup> "Lettres à un Français sur la Crise Actuelle" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.116

end of the revolution.<sup>116</sup> The further logic of this position is of course that since the revolution does not depend for its success on an urban proletariat, it is not necessary for society to reach a stage of advanced capitalism before moving to socialism; Bakunin accepted this logic.

The other major class issue where Marx and Bakunin differed was on collaboration with bourgeois radicals. Since Marx's theory was predicated on the seizure of the state, compromises with the radical bourgeoisie to achieve better material conditions for workers through the state, and to achieve positions of influence in the state machinery, were quite acceptable. For Bakunin however, they were futile and dangerous. Any bourgeois would destroy his own position were he to direct any serious action against capitalism. The radical bourgeoisie required that any working class action remain within the capitalist state framework.<sup>117</sup> "[The people] will remain enslaved as long as the working masses continue to serve as tools of bourgeois politics...even if these politics pretend to be revolutionary. For all bourgeois politics whatever the label or colour have only one purpose: to perpetuate domination by the bourgeoisie, and bourgeois domination is the slavery of the proletariat."<sup>118</sup> Furthermore the greater advantages of the bourgeoisie (education, money etc.) would lead to them becoming the dominant party in any alliance. The people had neither the time nor the knowledge to participate in governmental functions. The bourgeoisie possessed both; hence not by right, but in fact, they held the exclusive privilege of governing.<sup>119</sup> An example of the deleterious effects of collaboration with bourgeois radicals, and involvement in bourgeois politics, was Lasalle's Social Democratic Party. For Bakunin, any political revolution made before a social revolution (which the social democrats advocated) would necessarily be bourgeois, and would only lead to a new, more efficient exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.<sup>120</sup> The social democratic programme of immediate gains (universal suffrage, replacement of the army

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<sup>116</sup> "Lettres à un Français sur la Crise Actuelle" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.117

<sup>117</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.91

<sup>118</sup> "The Policy of the International" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp.163-164

<sup>119</sup> "Representative Government and Universal Suffrage" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.222

with militias, free education, freedom of speech etc.) proved merely that the social democrats were interested only in the political reform of the institutions and laws of the state, and that for them socialism was just an empty dream. Universal suffrage, however exercised in a society where the mass of workers are dominated by a minority dependent on property or capital, can only produce elections which are illusory, antidemocratic and opposed to the needs, instincts and real will of the population.<sup>121</sup> Were it not for the fact that aspirations of the worker-members went much further, would we not, he asked, be justified in saying that the Social Democratic Party was created for the sole purpose of using the working masses to promote the political ambitions of the German bourgeois democrats?<sup>122</sup>

#### 4-2d: Organisation and Tactics of the Revolutionary Organisation

Bakunin's proposals for the organisational form which the International should take reflected the ends he hoped the International would achieve, ie. a society organised from the bottom up, based on freely federated producers' associations. The popular revolution would create its revolutionary organisation from the bottom upwards and from the circumference inwards, in accordance with the principle of liberty, not from the top downwards and from the centre outwards, as is the way of all authority.<sup>123</sup> A good illustration of what Bakunin meant can be found in his writings on the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune. For example, in a letter to Albert Richard, written in April 1870, he wrote that if Paris were to rise in revolt, its duty would be not to organise the revolution, but to proclaim the liquidation of the political, judicial, financial and administrative state and incineration of all papers and deeds. It would of course organise itself as best it could, in a federation of streets and *quartiers*, and call upon the people and the communes elsewhere to follow its example, each in their own place, and to join in federation with Paris and all other revolutionary areas.<sup>124</sup> The provinces should not wait for instructions

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<sup>120</sup> "A Critique of the German Social-Democratic Programme" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.211

<sup>121</sup> "L'Empire Knouto-germanique..." in *Archives Bakounine VII* p.14

<sup>122</sup> "A Critique..." in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.216.

<sup>123</sup> "Programme and Purpose of the Revolutionary Organisation of International Brothers" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.170

<sup>124</sup> "Lettre à Albert Richard" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.279

from Paris but rise simultaneously. The revolution should everywhere remain independent of the central point, which must be its expression and product, not its source, direction and cause.<sup>125</sup> In line with this strategy, Bakunin travelled to Lyon to help start an insurrection there in September 1870, which he hoped would trigger a more general rising in the French provinces. The rising was however quickly crushed.

It would seem from Bakunin's writings that all this popular activity could be organised in the thick of the revolution, that the fact of revolt would necessitate popular self-organisation. Nevertheless, Bakunin obviously did not disparage organisation in advance of the revolution, in the International for example. Such organisation was indeed necessary for the spread of socialist ideas among the workers, and for the encouragement of a spirit of solidarity. However, like the revolution itself and the free society to follow, he insisted that the International be organised on federalist lines. Indeed, this should be seen as a necessary corollary of Bakunin's revolutionary programme; since his aim was to break up all centralised authority, it was necessary that the organisation which was to do this be decentralised, and no section have any authority over any other. On the other hand, the Marxists, concentrating on the seizure of political power, of necessity opted for a centralised political organisation. For both, the means were reflections of the ends.

This difference manifested itself in the dispute which split the International in 1871-2. The London Congress of 1871, to which Bakunin's supporters in the Jura were not invited, proclaimed an increase in the authority of the General Council, and made obligatory in the programme of the International the conquest of political power by the proletariat. In reply the Jura Federation, which emerged from a split in the *Fédération Romande* and was associated with Bakunin's ideas, held a conference and issued the famous Sonvillier circular which called upon opponents of centralism to arrange another congress to resist the accumulation of power in the General

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<sup>125</sup> "Lettre à Albert Richard" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.280

Council and reaffirm the autonomy of sections.<sup>126</sup> The next Congress of the International at the Hague however, with an "energetically created" Marxist majority, enlarged the General Council's power further, expelled Bakunin and James Guillaume and moved the headquarters to New York to protect it from non-Marxists.<sup>127</sup> The federalists called another congress at St. Imier, at which were represented the Spanish, Italian, Jura, French and American sections, denounced the General Council, stating that its activities had become a threat to the independence of the sections, and attacked the preoccupation with political power which it represented.<sup>128</sup> They insisted that only the free spontaneous action of the masses themselves could liberate society, and that the first duty of the working class was to destroy political power, without recourse to any revolutionary government. This declaration attracted broad support from other sections, including Belgium, Holland and Britain, while the authoritarian International went into decline.

Alongside the open organisation of workers however, Bakunin also advocated a secret society of revolutionaries, and this has aroused some historical controversy, with Bakunin accused of creating just the sort of revolutionary dictatorship he professed to reject.<sup>129</sup> A closer look at Bakunin's writings with his federalism in mind reveals that this view is not, in fact, correct, although it cannot be denied that his secret associations pose problems.

Bakunin recognised that for the establishment of revolutionary alliance and the triumph over united reaction, the unity of revolutionary thought and action must find an agent in the thick of the popular anarchy. This agent would be the association of international brothers. This secret organisation would constitute the intermediary between the revolutionary idea and the popular instinct.<sup>130</sup> Such an organisation, united by a single idea, that of

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<sup>126</sup> The circular is reproduced in Guillaume *L'Internationale* v.2 pt.3 pp.237-241. It claims that the General Council, which was supposed to be elected annually by the Congress, was by now the private property of a few individuals, and had in fact become a sort of government, a position which led it to see its ideas alone as admissible in the International.

<sup>127</sup> "Lettre à Albert Richard" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.79

<sup>128</sup> C. Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism* Cambridge 1989 p.29

<sup>129</sup> Marshall *Demanding...* p. 287; Mendel *Michael Bakunin* p.299; Pyziur *Doctrine* p.130

<sup>130</sup> "Programme and Purpose..." Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.172



destruction of the state, would be needed to channel the energies of the revolutionary masses and to bind the isolated groups into one organic whole.<sup>131</sup> It would work through the natural personal influence of its members, who have no power to direct, but who are scattered in a web throughout the regions, districts and communes.<sup>132</sup>

Because Bakunin rejected the seizure of the state and revolution by decree, this organisation had to remain "invisible" in formal and official terms. It would also have to cultivate the self-activity of workers, to prevent them allowing any lapses into authoritarianism. They would strengthen or create local workers' organisations, which were based in the manifestations of the life and labour of the workers, and would remain local and autonomous, with no fixed authority.<sup>133</sup> The organisation would be made up largely of *déclassé* ex-students and intellectuals, necessary because they had the access to knowledge, theory and organisational skills which were denied the workers.<sup>134</sup> This was the only form of co-operation with bourgeois elements that Bakunin would countenance; he insisted that such elements would have to be strictly ex-bourgeois, having broken fully any ties with their former life. Perhaps foreseeing the problem that so much depended on the devotion of such individual personalities to popular self-liberation, he insisted that they must be passionately steadfast, and unalterably devoted to the people, and having turned aside from all other interests, all material comforts and pleasures of society, all the satisfactions of vainglory, love of rank and fame. They must be people who would refuse personal historical importance during their lives, and even a name in history after their death.<sup>135</sup> Thus while it is possible to point out that even with such an organisation, unscrupulous individuals could try to use it for personal benefit, and turn personal influence into factual authority, it is not true to say that Bakunin proposed a revolutionary dictatorship by a secret society.

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<sup>131</sup> "Letter to Sergei Nechaev" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.193

<sup>132</sup> "Letter to Sergei Nechaev" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.193

<sup>133</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* pp.114-115

<sup>134</sup> Saltman *The Social and Political Thought...* p.111

<sup>135</sup> "Letter to Sergei Nechaev" in Lehning (ed.) *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* p.194

As for the tactics to be used for revolution, Bakunin favoured that of popular insurrection. This arose from the fact that he insisted that the people must not form an organisation to seize political power at the centre, but destroy all its manifestations and instruments in their localities. In this he opposed both Marx and the Social Democrats, who insisted on the seizure of political power and directed their tactics accordingly towards, for example, electoral strategies, or strikes and political agitations among workers for improved conditions at work, and for political rights on the broader scale. Bakunin did not however disparage strikes and other tactics; but he did insist that all agitations retain a strictly economic character. "Let us co-operate in our common enterprise to make our lives a little more supportable and a little less difficult. Let us, whenever possible, establish producer-consumer co-operatives and mutual credit societies which...plant the precious seeds for the organisation of the future."<sup>136</sup> Clearly Bakunin felt that the primary use of such tactics was educational, rather than revolutionary. In terms of the revolution itself, Bakunin advocated mass insurrection, co-ordinated by the above-described revolutionary association. As well as destroying the instruments of the state, the workers should seize the means of production, and the peasants, the land, and put them into communal ownership.

A corollary of this position was what later came to be known as propaganda by deed. We shall return to this subject in a later chapter, but it is worth outlining here the origins of the idea in Bakunin's works. In his *Letter to a Frenchman*, Bakunin wrote that revolutionaries should "leave to others the task of the theoretical development of the principles of the social revolution, and let us content ourselves with their broad application, with their incarnation in deeds."<sup>137</sup> "Now we must embark on the stormy sea of revolution, and from now we must propagate our principles not by words, but by deeds - for these are the most popular, the most powerful and the most irresistible form of propaganda."<sup>138</sup> It should be borne in mind that Bakunin was addressing the particular situation of the Franco-Prussian war in these passages, and that

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<sup>136</sup> "The Policy of the International" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.173

<sup>137</sup> "Lettre à un Français" in *Archives Bakounine VI* p.51

<sup>138</sup> "Lettre à un Français" in *Archives Bakounine VI* pp.51-52

they do not indicate, as some implied, (including "Bakuninists" in Russia) that Bakunin was opposed to theory. Nevertheless, the idea of propaganda by deed became an important feature of anarchism in Europe from the second half of the 1870s, where it became distorted to mean terrorism. For Bakunin however the idea was predicated on his belief that the popular masses, denied access to books and abstract ideas, discovered their social and economic position, and their means to escape it, from historical experience. Thus actions, which corresponded to the historically generated instincts of the people in periods of revolution, were a far more effective means of spreading ideas than written or oral propaganda.

#### **4-3: Russia**

In the International, especially in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war and the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871, a gulf was growing between authoritarian and non-authoritarian wings over their differing policies of centralism, conquest of political power and nationalisation of industry against federalism, destruction of political power and workers' control.<sup>139</sup> Bakunin himself however devoted his energy to inciting revolution, which he now felt could start in Russia, as an organised movement was beginning to develop there, and his ideas of federalism and the peasant commune coincided with Populist tenets. The growth of a colony of students and émigrés in Switzerland expanded Bakunin's influence on the Russian movement; although he did not have much direct impact; as Venturi claims, Populism obtained from him not so much an organisation as a world-view.<sup>140</sup>

Bakunin wrote a survey of the *obshchina* in Russia, describing its advantages and failings, with its insistence on the right of all to the land balanced by its peasant monarchism and patriarchy.<sup>141</sup> He maintained that revolutionaries must go to the people, not as teachers however but to lead them to revolt. Conditions in Russia were ideal for social revolution, he claimed; there was no bourgeoisie or privileged workers, there was hatred for nobles and officials, and poverty. The commune could serve as a basis for

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<sup>139</sup> Woodcock *Anarchism* p.158

<sup>140</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.430

<sup>141</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.431

resistance against the state, but isolation meant that that organisation was needed to broaden local revolts - which is where the revolutionaries come in. In a pamphlet written in May 1869 entitled "Some Words to my Young Brothers in Russia" Bakunin called on the Russian youth, whose programme represented the socialist and revolutionary idea of the people, to leave the universities and the schools which separated them from the people, to join them, and learn from them how they could best serve their cause. They must not go as master, protector, dictator or benefactor, but as the unifier and organiser of popular forces. Thus Bakunin tried to transfer his anarchism onto the plane of Russian Populism; the parallels with the later movement to the people are obvious and will be explored in subsequent chapters. Although it can be said of Bakunin that he did not accept the vision of the *narod* as passive and malleable, vulnerable children awaiting guidance and defence from the radical intellectuals, which Cathy Frierson notes as a feature of early populism,<sup>142</sup> his encouragement of students to go and learn from the people probably coincided with the impulse of the intelligentsia to place them on a moral pedestal and seek revelation from them. Both the impulse to teach and that to learn from the *narod* stem, as Frierson points out, from a cultural distance between intelligentsia and *narod*, which Bakunin was as unable to bridge as many others.<sup>143</sup>

Bakunin first contacted Russian émigrés in Switzerland in 1867. Some, in particular the Marxist Nikolai Utin, staunchly opposed him. Others joined him, notably Nikolai Zhukovskii, who found the money to start a journal for Russia, the *Narodnoe delo*. The first issue came out in 1868 and was largely written by Bakunin. It was according to Venturi "greedily devoured" by Russian radicals during the White Terror after Karakozov's attempt to assassinate the Tsar, reopening the debates silenced by repression.<sup>144</sup> It warned against the dangers of positivism and scientific elitism (i.e. the Nihilists) and attacked the illusory nature of Alexander's reforms. It called for

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<sup>142</sup> C. Frierson *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late 19th Century Russia* New York/Oxford 1993 p.41

<sup>143</sup> Frierson *Peasant Icons* p.40

<sup>144</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.431

revolts to reawaken the people's awareness of its strength. *Narodnoe Delo* slipped from Bakunin's control after the first issue; meanwhile however Sergei Nechaev appeared on the scene.

Nechaev had become a student at St. Petersburg university in 1868, and had joined Ralli's circle of revolutionaries there. He collaborated with Tkachev in a Revolutionary Programme, and left Russia in the wake of the student unrest of 1869. He presented himself to Bakunin as the representative of a powerful secret society in Russia, and his energy and single-mindedness so impressed Bakunin that he took him into a secret revolutionary union, which seems in fact to have been fictitious. The collaboration between Bakunin and Nechaev, both at the time and in subsequent history, is one of the major sources of controversy over Bakunin's revolutionary career, a controversy which centres around the disputed authorship of the *Catechism of the Revolutionary*, to which we shall return below.

The initial result of their collaboration was a number of revolutionary pamphlets to be smuggled back into Russia for distribution. The first of these was addressed *To the Russian Students*, in which Nechaev announces his escape from prison and his continuing liberty.<sup>145</sup> In fact Nechaev had never been a prisoner of the Russian government; this was a fiction which he invented to impress the exiles in Switzerland. The pamphlet called on the Russian students to strengthen their ranks and to be harder on themselves, to finish what the fighters of the past had started. The basis should be hatred for the existing order and revenge for the past and for the *narod*.<sup>146</sup>

A further pamphlet, addressed to Russian women, outlined the position of ignorance and servitude in which women were held by patriarchal Russian society. Rather than advocating female emancipation, however, the pamphlet linked the subjugation of women to that of the workers, and claimed that the only solution to this joint subjugation was via social revolution. Their position was caused by the imposition of laws, the juridical family and the private

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<sup>145</sup> "K russkim studentam" in *Archives Bakounine IV* Appendice II p.309

<sup>146</sup> "K russkim studentam" in *Archives Bakounine IV* Appendice II p.310

ownership of property. Only when the land and the factories were in the hands of the associations of producers of both sexes would women be equal.<sup>147</sup>

Nechaev returned to Russia to build his organisation, now claiming to represent a vast European revolutionary network. He fled Russia again after the murder of Ivanov, a fellow-conspirator, and returned to Switzerland, still claiming to be the head of the Russian revolution. In March 1870, Bakunin wrote another pamphlet for the Russian movement *To the Russian Youth*.<sup>148</sup> Here he set out his anarchist ideas on the state, castigating the liberals and radicals who relied on the state and pointing out that even in advanced democracies like Switzerland or the United States, the workers were still subjected to a privileged minority. He then set out to describe the International for the benefit of the Russians, explaining that within the International there were three main strands: peaceful, bourgeois socialists (mutualists), revolutionary statist, and revolutionary anarchists.<sup>149</sup> He described the spread of the International throughout Europe and the recognition by most of its members of revolutionary methods. As for the revolutionary youth from the educated classes, very few of these managed to devote themselves to the workers' cause. Those who did had to be carefully watched to ensure that old habits did not return; he warned particularly against those who had adopted the workers' cause but by position, custom and connections still belonged to the world opposed to it.<sup>150</sup> Bakunin also discussed the "labour aristocracy", most of whom were semi-bourgeois artisans, but some of whom formed a sort of aristocracy by their revolutionary energy and conviction. These workers, who united an understanding of the social question with popular instinct, could, along with the fully *déclassé* students, be useful and beneficial.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> "L'Association Révolutionnaire Russe aux Femmes" in *Archives Bakounine IV* Appendice II p.322

<sup>148</sup> "Vsesvetnyi revolyutsionnyi soyuz sotsial'noi demokratii. Russkoe otdelenie. K russkoi molodezhi" in *Archives Bakounine V* pp.75-103

<sup>149</sup> "Vsesvetnyi revolyutsionnyi soyuz..." in *Archives Bakounine V* p.81

<sup>150</sup> "Vsesvetnyi revolyutsionnyi soyuz..." in *Archives Bakounine V* p.88

<sup>151</sup> "Vsesvetnyi revolyutsionnyi soyuz..." in *Archives Bakounine V* p.96

The most notorious piece of writing to emerge from Bakunin's collaboration with Nechaev was the *Catechism of the Revolutionary*, whose authorship is disputed. Venturi claims it was a collaboration,<sup>152</sup> Michael Prawdin agrees,<sup>153</sup> whereas Saltman states categorically that it was Nechaev's work. He points to the consistencies between it and other works by Nechaev, as opposed to the contradiction between its negativist violence, terrorism and putschist conspiracy and any of Bakunin's writings.<sup>154</sup> There is little documentary evidence either way, although the discovery of a letter written by Bakunin to Nechaev seemed to indicate that the work had been Nechaev's and that Bakunin had disapproved of it.<sup>155</sup> This is not entirely conclusive however, and Philip Pomper claimed, after a stylistic examination that parts of the document had been written by Bakunin.<sup>156</sup> Based on what we have discussed up to now of Bakunin's ideas, I am inclined to agree with Saltman that it was, substantially at least, the work of Nechaev. As well as advice on conspiracy it advocates a ruthlessly dedicated revolutionary prototype, who regards others, including other members of the revolutionary organisation, as expendable revolutionary capital. However, Nechaev tried to impose his methods on the émigrés, resorting to blackmail and theft (he stole papers from Bakunin and others). He also damaged Bakunin's reputation by writing a threatening letter to a publisher demanding that Bakunin be released from translating Marx's *Capital* since he had been "requisitioned" by the Russian revolutionaries.<sup>157</sup> Bakunin, now certain that he had been deceived, broke with Nechaev, condemning his Jesuitical ideas and spending days writing letters of warning to his friends.

Bakunin claimed in the letter in which he broke with Nechaev that he had seen in him the only serious revolutionary movement in Russia, and against his instinctive doubts had hoped that his energy and dedication could

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<sup>152</sup> Venturi *Roots...* p.365

<sup>153</sup> M. Prawdin *The Unmentionable Nechaev* London 1961 p.62

<sup>154</sup> Saltman *Social and Political Thought* p.131

<sup>155</sup> "Pis'mo k Sergeyu Nechaevu" in *Archives Bakounine IV* pp.103-134. The passage reads "Remember how angry you were when I called you an *abrek* and your *Catechism* an *abrek's catechism*." (p.107)

<sup>156</sup> P. Pomper "Bakunin, Nechaev and the *Catechism of the Revolutionary*. The Case for Joint Authorship" in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* v.10 1976. See also P. Pomper *Sergei Nechaev* New Brunswick 1979 pp.94-98

be diverted onto the right path.<sup>158</sup> He went over his own idea for the revolutionary association, to unite and organise the revolution, and castigated Nechaev for his Jesuitical methods which would create mistrust and disunity. Change the circumstances, he wrote, and with Nechaev's system, you could create perfect police spies.<sup>159</sup>

Following the split from Nechaev, the Franco-Prussian war distracted Bakunin from Russia, as he tried to start insurrections in Marseilles and Lyon. The Paris Commune influenced all socialists, but thanks to the likes of Sazhin, Yuzhakova and Lavrov (Russians who took part in the Commune) and the many Communards who fled to Switzerland, it had a particular effect on the Russian colony of students which had gathered there.<sup>160</sup> It also inspired Bakunin's *Knouto-Germanic Empire*, which suggests a reactionary alliance between Germany and Russia to put down revolution, and also develops a philosophical basis to Bakunin's anarchism. However it hardened positions within the International, with both Bakuninists and Marxists claiming it as vindication of their principles.

Meanwhile Bakunin returned to the Russians. With Sazhin, Ralli, Elsnits and Gol'stein he formed the Russian Brotherhood, whose programme aimed at the destruction of the state. This group will be dealt with in more detail in a subsequent chapter. Anarchism spread quickly among the Russian students, possibly in part because its organisational ideas corresponded more closely to the *kruzhki* of the students rather than aiming for a large centralised organisation,<sup>161</sup> as well as emphasising the people in much the same way as did Russian Populism. The arrival of Lavrov stimulated further debate in the colony, and the split between Bakuninists and Lavrovists was exacerbated by squabbles over the library started by the Bakuninists. Lavrov advocated a more gradualist programme which envisaged a long period of intellectual preparation by young revolutionaries before going to the people to start building up a revolutionary movement. The divide between Bakunin and

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<sup>157</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* p.261

<sup>158</sup> "Pis'mo k Sergeyu Nechaevu" in *Archives Bakounine IV* p.105

<sup>159</sup> "Pis'mo k Sergeyu Nechaevu" in *Archives Bakounine IV* p.117

<sup>160</sup> J. Meijer *The Russian Colony in Zurich 1870-1873* Assen 1955 p.77



Lavrov themselves was never as great as that exhibited by their respective followers, especially in the student colony, but the divide was reflected in the movement within Russia, and consequently we shall deal with the debate between Bakuninists and Lavrovists in some detail in the next chapter.<sup>162</sup>

Within the Bakuninist group, clashes over their press ended with Ralli, Elsnits and Gol'stein removing to Geneva to form the Revolutionary Commune of Russian Anarchists, working with the Chaikovskii Circle's printer L. Gol'denberg to produce pamphlets to be smuggled into Russia. Another *Chaikovets*, F.N. Lermontov, proved to be one of Bakunin's few direct links with Russia. Bakunin tried to set up a new group involving him, but this only aroused the resentment of already existing groups.<sup>163</sup> When Lermontov returned to Russia, however, he and Sergei Kovalik set up the first Bakuninist group in St. Petersburg. Another convert was Debagorii-Mokrievich, who on his return to Russia went straight "to the people", and was later involved in the southern *buntarstvo* movement.

In 1873, Bakunin published his *Statism and Anarchy* which was written for a Russian audience and became the focus of Bakuninist opposition to Lavrovism in Russia. According to most of the memoir accounts of the time, it found favour over Lavrov's journal *Vpered!* and Lavrov himself admitted that the movement at that time was mostly Bakuninist.<sup>164</sup> *Statism and Anarchy's* vision of a reactionary Europe dominated by Germany, with the countries on the fringes (including and especially Russia) the only hope for genuine revolution, must have excited the Russian movement. Bakunin's influence can be directly seen in the early *Zemlya i volya* groups, the *buntarstvo* of the mid 1870s, and according to Venturi the movement "to the people". His ideas were also transmitted by Ralli's group through their newspaper *Rabotnik*, which inspired D'yakov's groups in St. Petersburg and the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation in Moscow. More

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<sup>161</sup> Meijer *The Russian Colony* p.83

<sup>162</sup> Bakunin and Lavrov met only once, in an attempt to resolve the library quarrel among their respective student supporters. When asked what impression Lavrov had made on him, Bakunin, referring to Lavrov's excessively scientific and learned language, replied "Quel dentiste!" Guillaume *L'Internationale* v.3 pt.5 p.81

<sup>163</sup> Meijer *The Russian Colony* p.137

generally his ideas of federalism, and popular revolt as opposed to political change corresponded to the movement in Russia until the rise of the centralised, disciplined parties in the late 1870s and the political terrorism of *Narodnaya volya*.

Appendix A of *Statism and Anarchy* dealt directly with the tasks facing the movement in Russia. It noted that two primary conditions for social revolution existed in Russia; poverty and desperation, and a popular ideal, arising from bitter historical experience.<sup>165</sup> However uneducated the Russian peasant may be, if propaganda corresponds to his experience and ideal, it will be absorbed. The first feature of this ideal is that the land belongs to the people. The second, that the right to use it rests with the *obshchina*. The third is the hostility of the *obshchina* to the state. However, this ideal is distorted by patriarchy, faith in the Tsar and the swallowing up of the individual in the *mir*. However, religious faith would likely be dispelled by the revolution itself; thus the propagandist should not concentrate especially on these issues, although if asked about them he should tell the peasants the truth. But the main focus of propaganda should be economic and political.<sup>166</sup> Patriarchy was more problematic. The despotism of husband and father turned the family into tyranny. The *mir* displayed the same patriarchy and despotism. Furthermore, as an organic whole, the *mir* had no bond with other *mirs*. This was a weakness which the revolutionaries would have to overcome. As for faith in the Tsar, it should be remembered that this faith was based in an imaginary Tsar who was all but in heaven, while the real Tsar was represented by the state. Thus the peasants adored an imaginary Tsar, but hated the real one.<sup>167</sup>

The decision facing the youth was how to raise the peasants in revolution. The first way was to try to spread communalism in the factories, set up rural colonies with collective cultivation and try to undermine patriarchy. The second was to try to induce a general insurrection. This was the path Bakunin recommended. The people were, he claimed, beginning to

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<sup>164</sup> P. Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty 1873-78gg.* St. Petersburg 1906 p.187

<sup>165</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.204

<sup>166</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.209

<sup>167</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* p.212

believe that more freedom was on the way. The task of revolutionary propaganda was to show that the injustices, robberies and brutalities by officials, landowners, priests and kulaks stem from autocratic power. The best peasants from each village had to be linked with other villages, regions and towns, and become convinced that all the people share a common misfortune and a common cause, and that all the villages must be organised to a common plan. A newspaper could help link remote communities and encourage a feeling of unity.<sup>168</sup> The young revolutionaries would only be trusted when the peasants encountered them in their own lives, misfortunes and rebellions. Thus Bakunin was not an advocate of the "flying propaganda" which was so much a part of the movement to the people of 1874, but something closer to the colonies of the early *Zemlya i volya*. The intellectual proletariat, Bakunin advised, should cut all ties with the exploiters and enemies of the people and regard themselves as capital belonging to the people's liberation, capital that should be spent only on gradually arousing and organising the universal popular uprising.<sup>169</sup> Thus as we shall see, Bakunin did not propose a completely spontaneous *buntarstvo* and denial of theory and spoken and written propaganda, as some of his Russian followers believed, but an organised and co-ordinated movement.

The Nechaev affair, the split in the International, and the squabbles among the Russian émigrés all contributed to the ageing Bakunin retiring from the revolutionary movement at the end of 1873. The anti-authoritarian International which arose out of the previous year's split continued to function but Bakunin took no part in it. He came out of retirement briefly to join a rising in Bologna organised by Errico Malatesta and others, but it was a failure and Bakunin escaped disguised as a priest. He concluded that Europe was entering a long phase of reaction, and that the only prospect for the destruction of states in the near future was in the fearful prospect of a major war, as he wrote to Elisée Reclus in 1875.<sup>170</sup> Bakunin died in Bern in 1876.

## **5: Conclusion**

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<sup>168</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* pp.214-215

<sup>169</sup> Bakunin *Statism...* pp.216-217

<sup>170</sup> "Letter to Elisée Reclus" in Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* pp. 354-355

From the above it should be clear that, in contrast to the portrayal of Bakunin by many historians, he in fact presented a coherent political philosophy which, by the end of his life, was accepted and acted upon by a majority within the first International. This philosophy evolved, as Richard Saltman has written, over a long period from the Hegelianism of the late 1830s and early 1840s, through the left critique of Hegel, attempts to find a philosophy of revolutionary action in the national liberation movements of the late 1840s (although as we have seen the designation of Pan-Slavist is inaccurate), finally arriving at the ideas of social and economic revolution and anarchism in the 1860s. This anarchism offered not only a philosophy of revolution but a powerful critique of capitalism, the state, and statist forms of revolutionary action such as Marxism.

The essential features of Bakunin's anarchism were as follows. Firstly, all political authority was an abstraction, an external and artificial force which distorted individual people for its own benefit. Society obeyed its own, "natural" forms of authority and mutual interaction, whilst the state took authority outside of society in the interests of an elite. Any class or group in charge of the state would use the state for its own benefit, and would use all means to prolong its control. This critique of political authority applied to all states, and to Marxism; thus as a revolutionary tactic, Bakunin rejected the seizure of state power. As a corollary of this position, he opposed centralism within the International in favour of federalism, and all forms of involvement in state politics.

Unlike Marx, Bakunin included the poorest and unskilled workers in the revolutionary army (the "lumpenproletariat"), and also saw the need to include the peasants in the revolution by encouraging them to seize the land and work it for themselves. He rejected collaboration with bourgeois radicals, in line with his opposition to involvement in state politics; only if a bourgeois(e) were fully *déclassé(e)* could s/he serve the popular cause with their knowledge, ideas and organisational abilities. Such *déclassés* elements, along with the best members of the peasantry and working class, should form a secret society to co-ordinate and unify revolutionary activity; such a society

must, however, be informal and rely on personal influence. Thus it was necessary for revolutionaries to live the lives of workers in order to fully break their ties with the bourgeois world, and to gain the trust of the workers and peasants.

Bakunin did not have a strong direct influence on the revolutionary movement in Russia, although he did encourage many of the students in Switzerland away from Lavrovism. However, in his *Statism and Anarchy* he set out his ideas for the Russian revolutionaries; Russia was in an ideal position for revolution, he claimed, since there existed there poverty, a popular ideal - that the land belonged to the peasants' *obshchina* - and a growing cadre of revolutionary youth. It was the task of the youth to induce a popular insurrection by propaganda, linking the best elements of the peasants of different villages into an organisation with a common plan. The youth would have to be encountered by the peasants in their daily lives in order to gain their trust, thus they must cut all ties with the world of the exploiters and go to the villages.

The aim of this chapter has been twofold. Firstly, the claim has been made that Bakunin's anarchism was a coherent political philosophy, not based in delinquency but in a critique of modern social, economic and political forms. Secondly, in drawing out the main features of anarchism through Bakunin's ideas, this chapter will serve as a basis for comparison with the ideas which evolved in the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1870s, and the debates which surrounded them. This will, it is hoped, contribute to an understanding of the complexities of the Russian movement, and set it more fully in its European context.

## Chapter Two: The Chaikovskii Circle

### 1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the founding and development of the first major revolutionary group of the 1870s, the so-called Chaikovskii Circle, from its roots in a student self-education circle to a society for revolutionary propaganda and activism. The main body of the chapter will be divided into four sections. The first of these sections deals with the early days of the circle, its foundation against the background of the student unrest at the end of the 1860s, and the Nechaev affair. I shall also highlight the role of the women's circle which joined it in the early days, with a view to discussing the gender aspects of the early revolutionary movement, the motivation of women for joining the movement, and the tension between feminism and female emancipation on the one hand, and revolutionism on the other. Since the number of women involved in the populist movement in the 1870s was so high compared to other revolutionary movements in Russia and elsewhere, this theme of gender will reappear in subsequent chapters.

The second section will deal with the circle's first attempts at radical action, which was largely among the students and concerned with the distribution of books and socialist literature, the so-called *knizhnoe delo*. This will entail an examination of the ideas of the émigré Petr Lavrov, whose ideas were closely paralleled at this point by the activities of the circle. An early programme for the circle, written in 1871 and obviously influenced by Lavrovism, will also be discussed.

The third section will deal with the *rabochee delo*, the period of the Chaikovskii circle's activity which began with contact being made between them and the working class of St. Petersburg. I intend to focus in particular on the perceived divide between the *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* workers, to which attention is drawn in many memoir accounts of the period, and which forms an interesting parallel with the ideas of Europe's anarchists in their ideas on constituency and the role of the workers in revolution. Also in this section I shall discuss briefly the provincial groups related to the Chaikovskii circle, since this aspect is not given very much space in accounts of the group to date.

Finally, the fourth section of this chapter will discuss the links formed with the émigrés in Zurich, and attempt to disprove that the link between the circle and Lavrov's group is indicative of its ideological persuasion in late 1873. Secondly, this section will deal with the programme written for the circle by Petr Kropotkin, which was clearly influenced by Bakunin's ideas. The argument will be made that Kropotkin, far from being in a minority of one in his anarchist views, was in fact expressing the views of a faction, and that the ideological shift in the circle during its contact with the workers and early attempts to contact the peasantry was such that Kropotkin felt he had a good chance of getting an openly anarchist programme accepted by the circle. In the conclusion, I will outline this ideological shift over the five years of the circle's existence and conclude that the circle was in fact closer to the ideas of Bakunin and the anarchists in Europe than the self-consciously Bakuninist circles in Russia at the time.

## **2: The Formation of the Circle**

### **2-1: The Vul'fovskaya kommuna**

The Chaikovskii Circle has its roots in a communal student group in St. Petersburg formed in 1869 known as the Vul'fovskaya kommuna, after the street on which it was located. Student "communes" were very much in vogue in Russia at this time, serving to share the cost of living, as study and self-education groups and as attempts to put into practice on a small scale the ideas picked up from socialist literature. The Vul'fovskaya kommuna was set up on the initiative of Mark Natanson, a student of the Medico-Surgical Academy, who kept a small library of socialist books. At the time the followers of Sergei Nechaev were seeking to create a conspiracy of secret organisations to agitate and direct peasant unrest.<sup>1</sup> They were convinced that a peasant revolution was imminent, and Nechaev had indeed set a date for its beginning; February 19th, 1870. This was the date when peasants would have to start paying their redemption fees for extra land they had received alongside their own plots in the Emancipation of 1861, or face giving it back to the landlord. Nechaev

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<sup>1</sup> P.A. Kropotkin *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1971 p.317

believed that once their financial situation became clear to them, the peasants would have no choice but to revolt.<sup>2</sup>

Natanson's circle was more interested in self-education, and the creation of morally developed personalities from among the intelligentsia. As such the group was not really revolutionary at this point; in fact according to Aleksandra Kornilova-Moroz the communal set-up was more to do with living cheaply and having some independence from landlords than with socialism.<sup>3</sup> *Nechaevtsy* frequently attended meetings of Natanson's circle however to put their point of view, in response to which a platform was drawn up which defined the group's differences with Nechaev.<sup>4</sup> It placed an emphasis on gathering information on the conditions and aspirations of the workers and peasants. Thus a moderate programme of information-gathering was adopted, as well as the study and distribution of socialist texts.<sup>5</sup> So the group was very much oriented toward the student youth at the time, with the longer term aim of spreading knowledge to the people. Contact was made with groups in other towns, and as early as 1870 Natanson's group was dispatching "useful" books to the provinces, by which was meant books on scientific and materialist themes, as well as those of a more "social" nature.<sup>6</sup>

The background to this activity and that of the Nechaevists was the student movement of the late 1860s, which had returned to life following the "White Terror" instigated by the Russian government in the wake of Dmitrii Karakozov's unsuccessful attempt on the tsar's life in 1866. The extent of state persecution of unreliable elements during the last years of the decade is illustrated by Richard Stites; women from Nizhnii Novgorod were banished for simply looking like nihilists; women in St. Petersburg who looked like nihilists were issued with the yellow passports of prostitutes.<sup>7</sup> Kropotkin's memoir contains similar recollections of the period; "Cropped hair and blue spectacles worn by a girl, a Scotch plaid worn in Winter by a student, instead of an

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<sup>2</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 p.361

<sup>3</sup> A. Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya i osnovanie kruzhka chaikovtsev" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.1 1926 p.22

<sup>4</sup> M. Miller "Ideological Conflicts in Russian Populism" in *Slavic Review* v.29 no.1 (March 1970) p.4

<sup>5</sup> I.E. Deniker "Vospominaniya" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.25

<sup>6</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.22

<sup>7</sup> R. Stites *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia* Princeton 1978 p.122



overcoat...were denounced as tokens of "political unreliability". If any student's lodgings came to be frequently visited by other students, it was periodically invaded by the state police and searched."<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the repressions, the student movement of the end of the decade echoed that of its beginning; demands were made for the right to meetings, organisation, and free speech.<sup>9</sup> Although the main focus was on specifically student issues, many of which would appear to be harmless, such as the right to organise cheap communal dining halls for example, the reactionary education minister, Dmitrii Tolstoi, was opposed to any form of autonomous student life and gave no ground. Furthermore the student movement was volatile; especially in St. Petersburg, attempts to interfere with even minor freedoms, such as the right to wear long hair, were greeted with violent and well-organised protest. By 1869 a movement of considerable size had developed and as a result of demonstrations and clashes with police the Medical Academy, Technological Institute and University in the capital were closed.<sup>10</sup> The movement was met with repression and eventually crushed; but both the movement itself and the repressions must have fanned the flames of a broader radicalism which looked beyond the confines of student life to social and economic organisation in Russia as a whole.

In a memoir account, Vera Zasulich notes that:

The students were divided into two camps: the 'moderates' and the 'radicals' led by Nechaev. The moderates were in the majority, but the two groups together constituted only a small minority of the student population. There were about three hundred activists, made up of first- and second-year students at the university, the medical school, and the technical and agricultural academies of St. Petersburg.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly at this stage Natanson's study circle would be firmly in the camp of the moderates, and differed from the Nechaevists in many important

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<sup>8</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.309

<sup>9</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.357

<sup>10</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.358

respects. Nechaev's group embodied the urge to action in the revolutionary tradition of the 1860s; they were also the culmination of the conspiratorial trend which found expression in Zaichnevskii's Society of Communists, Ishutin's terrorists and which could be traced back through the Russian revolutionary tradition to certain members of the Petrashevskii circle of the 1840s, and some of the Decembrists. Nechaev wanted to create a disciplined, hierarchical organisation to head the expected peasant revolts, and to radicalise the student movement. In this he was joined by the Jacobin Petr Tkachev, with whom he produced a revolutionary programme and began to form his organisation. He also collaborated abroad with Bakunin, as we have seen, and wrote the famous *Catechism of the Revolutionary*. He did not flinch from any means to unite people to his cause; all sentiment, friendship and compassion was to be denied by his ruthless revolutionary prototypes. He called for revolutionaries to use blackmail and deceit to bind people to the organisation, in particular those in positions of power and influence, and prominent liberals. Doctrinaires, "revolutionaries on paper", should be pushed into real commitments, as a result of which most would perish, and a few yield real results. Each comrade in the organisation should have at his disposal second and third rank revolutionaries who were to be regarded as capital to be expended in the cause.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate aim of these "Jesuitical schemes", as Bakunin came to call them, was to direct the peasant insurrection to the overthrow of Tsarism.

Natanson's group, with its more moderate aims of gathering information about the condition of the peasantry, and its peaceful means of spreading socialist ideas and useful books among the intelligentsia represented an opposing trend. This opposition to Nechaev's extremism is representative of the divide in Russian populism between "actionism" and "propagandism"; this is often represented in historical accounts as the divide between Bakuninism and

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<sup>11</sup> "Vera Zasulich" in B.A. Engel/C. Rosenthal (eds.) *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* London 1975 pp.72-73

<sup>12</sup> The Catechism is reproduced in P. Pomper "Bakunin, Nechaev and the Catechism of a Revolutionary" *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* v.10 no.4 1976 pp.546-550, in M. Confino *Violence dans la Violence; le Débat Bakounine-Nechaev* Paris 1973 pp.97-105, and in Yu. Steklov *Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, ego zhizn' i deyatel'nost'* Moscow 1926-27 v.III pp.468-473

Lavrovism.<sup>13</sup> This distinction is, however, not entirely accurate and rests upon inaccurate interpretations of Bakunin's ideas by both populists at the time and historians subsequently. As we have seen, Bakunin supported propaganda in various forms, by word, in print and by deeds. Furthermore, although Nechaev associated closely with Bakunin, his ruthless centralised conspiracy is hard to equate with Bakunin's federalism and anti-authoritarianism. As we shall see in later chapters, the urge to action in Russian populism took various forms, some based on Bakunin's ideas, some on what were perceived to be Bakunin's ideas, and some on ideas which contradicted Bakunin's completely. At this stage in the student movement, however, the equation was fairly simple: radicals followed Nechaev and called for immediate action, moderates called for self-development, education and the spreading of socialist ideas among the intelligentsia and the *narod*.

In spite of its moderation in ends and means at this stage, it should be noted that Natanson's group in terms of its organisational forms more closely resembled Bakunin's ideal. Unlike Nechaev's, Natanson's circle was based on personal trust and friendship and had no formal leadership, although as might be expected strong personalities like Mark Natanson's came to the fore. The group did not have any formal statutes or regulations as yet, and as we shall see, those programmes for the society which have survived do not appear to have been formally adopted by the whole society. The autonomy of groups in the provinces was always respected and no attempt was made to impose leadership from the capital. From the memoir sources, it is apparent that the revelations which came out at the time of the trial of Nechaev's followers in 1871 affected most of all the organisational forms taken by student groups at the time.<sup>14</sup> They were encouraged in their endeavours to build an organisation based on trust, equality and mutual knowledge; Nechaev had taught them how not to build an organisation.<sup>15</sup> For now Natanson's circle discounted agitation among the peasants and immediate revolutionary action in favour of the

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<sup>13</sup> See eg. Venturi *Roots* pp. 429-468

<sup>14</sup> According to A.O. Lukashevich, the critical ideas raised in the trial of the *Nechaevtsy* encouraged youth in the provinces to question their values and in particular their attitudes to the peasant reforms. The expulsion of radical students to the provinces helped this process. "V narod!" in *Byloe* no.3 1907 pp.1-2

development of moral personalities among the intelligentsia; this position would change as the circle underwent a rapid evolution.

## 2-2: The Women's Circle

The other foundation stone of the Chaikovskii Circle was a group of women students who had met on the Alarchin higher education courses for women in St. Petersburg. The group was centred around the Kornilova sisters and Sof'ya Perovskaya. This women's group was similar to Natanson's in that the members were interested in study and self-development, but was less formally organised, being more like a circle of friends.<sup>16</sup> They also took a particular interest in the "woman question", sexual equality and higher education for women.<sup>17</sup> There were many such groups in the capital at the time, which generally did not allow men at their meetings.<sup>18</sup> The Kornilova/Perovskaya group did however have links with Natanson's group and as their aims were so similar a merger was discussed. Perovskaya initially opposed the idea since the men, who were older and more versed in political matters, might suppress the independent development of the women.<sup>19</sup> However the two groups did eventually merge in August 1871.

The question of why so many women joined the radical movement in Russia when they did not do so elsewhere in nearly such high proportion is not an easy one to answer. Perovskaya's group of women were far from alone in 1870s Russia in moving from a position of advocating female emancipation to joining the socialist movement and becoming revolutionaries. Individuals differed in the development of their ideas, and in the circumstances surrounding their joining the revolutionary movement; for example, Vera Zasulich recalls that at a young age, her motivation for joining the radicals was not so much concern for the suffering of the people but "a desire for a crown of thorns" that moved her. Vera Figner on the other hand became aware of how social relations kept the poor poor, and shifted from an attitude of philanthropic concern to a

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<sup>15</sup> N. Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* Moscow 1973 p.101; Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.305

<sup>16</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.23

<sup>17</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.11; E. Kovalskaya "Iz moikh vospominanii" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.1 1926 p.32

<sup>18</sup> Kovalskaya "Iz moikh vospominanii" p.33

<sup>19</sup> Kovalskaya "Iz moikh vospominanii" p.33

realisation of the need to direct efforts against institutions, rather than ameliorating individual cases. Elizaveta Koval'skaya seems to have combined feminism and socialism from the first, being concerned with the slavery of both women and the peasants in Russia, and setting up women's socialist circles.<sup>20</sup>

Radical writers in Russia had espoused the cause of women's emancipation from the patriarchal family since the 1850s, calling for more autonomy and independence for them, in particular in the field of education.<sup>21</sup> During the 1860s, many young women of the nobility left home seeking personal freedom. Some soon came to see that significant improvements in their position could only come about in the context of broader social change; hence, according to Barbara Engel, the influence of Chernyshevskii's "What is to be Done?", which offered blueprints for solutions to the woman question in fictitious marriages to escape family tyranny, free unions of autonomous individuals in place of patriarchal marriage and so on.<sup>22</sup> Education was the central cause, especially for younger women, in the 1860s, since only men had access to higher education and such education as did exist for women was on the whole of a low standard. Self-education circles flourished and some women made efforts to extend these circles to the working class. Common routes into the radical world of the early 1870s were through the Alarchin courses, informal higher education courses which women were permitted to attend, and which soon became the preserve of women, and the student colony in Zurich, where many young Russian women went to pursue higher education and soon came into contact with the political émigrés. By the 1870s, the social issues discussed by the women in their circles, and in the circles they joined with men, had eclipsed feminism for many of these women, who now threw themselves into the cause of the workers and peasants. However Engel is probably correct to claim that it was feminism and the desire for emancipation as women that

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<sup>20</sup> The three examples are all taken from Engel/Rosenthal *Five Sisters* pp. 69, 16 and 211 respectively.

<sup>21</sup> Engel/Rosenthal *Five Sisters* p.xx

<sup>22</sup> Engel/Rosenthal *Five Sisters* p.xx. Fictitious marriages continued to be used in the 1870s to rescue potential revolutionary women from the clutches of their families. See eg. Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.134 and S. Sinigub "Vospominaniya Chaikovtza" in *Byloe* 1906 No.8 p.42

developed their capacity for action and enabled them to participate in the radical movement on an equal footing with men.<sup>23</sup>

Richard Stites in his study of the women's movement in Russia has noted three major responses to the "woman question" posed from the 1850s, those being feminist, nihilist and radical.<sup>24</sup> The first was essentially liberal and moderate, calling for reforms especially of women's economic and educational status, self-help and assistance by the "fortunate" for the less fortunate. The leaders of this movement were on the whole privileged and educated, and older than their more radical sisters, which may explain why they did not make the break with their families and the past.<sup>25</sup> M.V. Trubnikova, A. Filosofova and N.V. Stasova began by forming societies to help the poor, offering cheap lodgings, co-operative work, kitchens and care for prostitutes. The campaign for women's higher education which began in earnest in 1868 resulted in the compromise of the Alarchin courses and later the Higher Courses in Moscow in 1872. Many liberals saw education and employment for women as important in discouraging political radicalism;<sup>26</sup> nevertheless, the social impetus behind many women's attempts to secure an education, i.e. the desire to serve the people, led them into radicalism anyway.

In describing the nihilist response to the woman question, Stites notes the influence of Chernyshevskii, in particular in the area of sexual freedom. In *What is to be Done?* he described a world of new human relations, of equality in free union, rejection of sexual jealousy, and sex based in moral and social life. However, Vera Pavlovna also discovers that economic independence is even more fundamental, and sets up a sewing co-operative to educate women to be self-reliant. The stress is on individual effort and self-education, study and work in circles, and artels as a basis for decent work for all.<sup>27</sup> The nihilist response to the woman question was one of inner personal rebellion, liberation from the family, equality and education. They differed from feminists in their desire to change the world rather than alleviate some of its shortcomings, but avoided the

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<sup>23</sup> Engel/Rosenthal *Five Sisters* p.xxiv

<sup>24</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* pp.64-156

<sup>25</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.66

<sup>26</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.78

revolutionary circles. They rejected dressing elegantly to find a husband, trying to escape the role of passive sex object, and in their boyish appearance and academic interests attempted to narrow the gender gap. With the help of more advanced men they set up lectures, mutual aid funds, workshops and artels; however most of these were swept away in the White Terror and such autonomous activities became the province of radicals. The nihilists refused to accept the prevailing culture of the time; but nor did they undertake to destroy it. The radicals on the other hand looked to the central socialist ideas of *What is to be Done?* in order to realise its emancipatory devices.<sup>28</sup>

In the radical/revolutionary movement from the late 1860s and early 1870s, the woman question was swallowed up in the "human question"; the personal goals of emancipation should be realised through the general movement. The first issue of *Narodnoe Delo*, which was written largely by Bakunin and smuggled into Russia, included passages on equality, abolition of marriage, free and equal education; but its main aim was to attack the individualism of the nihilists and to call on the young to join the popular cause.<sup>29</sup> The appeal of the Russian Revolutionary Society *To Women*, which we discussed in the previous chapter, concluded that only after the revolution could equality be achieved, and called upon women to take an equal part in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>30</sup> Many women of the 1870s struggled for an education as a means of helping the people; many were persuaded that if they were to help the people in any significant way, they would have to give up the classroom and join the revolutionary movement.

Clearly the struggle for education was a major factor in influencing women to join the radical movement in Russia. Vera Figner speaks of the iron will young women needed to overcome material difficulties, prejudice and parental opposition in order to get an education.<sup>31</sup> Ekaterina Breshkovskaya encountered the revolutionary groups of Kiev through her efforts to provide

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<sup>27</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.93

<sup>28</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.114

<sup>29</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.126

<sup>30</sup> *Archives Bakounine* Leiden 1961-1981 v.IV Appendice II pp.320-322. This pamphlet was a product of the Bakunin-Nechaev collaboration.

<sup>31</sup> Engel/Rosenthal *Five Sisters* p.6

education for women and peasants.<sup>32</sup> The women's circle which joined Natanson's group, which included Sof'ya Perovskaya and the Kornilova sisters, had met on the Alarchin courses and formed a circle to study geometry,<sup>33</sup> at this stage (1870) educating themselves was at the forefront of their minds, although Perovskaya was interested in the woman question and thought of becoming a campaigner for equality, and the group as a whole was reading books on social issues including Flerovskii's *Position of the Working Class in Russia*, J.S. Mill and Lasalle.<sup>34</sup> It was through this interest in social and economic issues that the group came into contact with Natanson's and eventually, despite initial opposition from Perovskaya, gave up its independence and agreed to join the men. This is illustrative of the porousness of the boundary between the nihilist and radical responses to the woman question, which Stites does not highlight sufficiently; many of the women who joined the radical circles at this time had begun from the "nihilist" position of trying to emancipate themselves as individuals and as women, and to obtain an education. The struggle to do so, and, we may assume, the repressions and persecution of nihilist women at the end of the 1860s, encouraged many to come to the conclusion that equality could only come about after radical change.<sup>35</sup> Others, motivated by a desire to serve the people through their education in, for example, medicine, came to realise that such service was a mere palliative for the deep-rooted socio-economic causes of poverty and disease. For others still, the combination of confidence gained from the struggle for education and on the woman question, accompanied by the generally enlightened attitudes prevailing among radical men, allowed women to enter a revolutionary career on an equal basis with men and prove what they were capable of.<sup>36</sup>

### **3: Lavrovism and the First Programme**

During the Summer of 1871 Natanson and Nikolai Chaikovskii had decided to create a larger and closer circle to broaden their work among the

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<sup>32</sup> A.S. Blackwell (ed.) *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution* Boston 1925 p.22

<sup>33</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.14

<sup>34</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." pp.13, 16

<sup>35</sup> V. Broido *Apostles into Terrorists* London 1977 pp.54, 62 notes antagonism from the Third Section against "unreliable" female students, and claims that persecution radicalised the young.

<sup>36</sup> Stites *Women's Liberation Movement* p.153



students. Two small dachas were rented outside St. Petersburg and a sort of summer school was conducted there. According to A. Knowles, this was the first gathering of the circle as a unit;<sup>37</sup> this is true if one considers the circle not fully formed until the women's circle joined Natanson's, although a "congress" of student groups from across Russia had taken place in St. Petersburg in January. A programme of study was drawn up and led by Natanson. However, the impact of major political developments was being felt by the circle; the trial of the *Nechaevtsy* brought to light Nechaev's Jesuitical schemes; the blind obedience demanded of his followers was the antithesis of the critically thinking individuals of Natanson's and Kornilova's groups.<sup>38</sup> However they admired the determination of the *Nechaevtsy* to fight for freedom.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Paris Commune and its bloody defeat caused a sensation in Russia, especially as it coincided with the Nechaev trial. According to Charushin, both of these events were influential in bringing the subject of the *narod* to the fore in student circles.<sup>40</sup> Leonid Shishko agrees that events in the International and the barbaric revenge against the Paris Commune had a greater influence on the mood of the youth than any events within Russia itself.<sup>41</sup> These influences were to help push the self-education circle onto a more radical course.

### 3-1: Petr Lavrov

Before we examine the circle's early attempts to form a programme of action, it is worth taking a brief diversion to examine the ideas of Petr Lavrov, who was hugely influential on radical students at the end of the 1860s and early 1870s, and whose influence is explicitly acknowledged in a programme produced by Natanson's circle in early 1871, which we shall discuss below. Lavrov is known by few in the West apart from scholars of the populist movement. This is perhaps because, true to his ideals, he tried to serve rather than lead the Russian revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, as Philip Pomper states, he and Bakunin came to stand as the titular heads of two trends in

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<sup>37</sup> A.V. Knowles "The Book Affair of the Chaikovsky Circle" in *Slavonic and East European Review* 1973 v.51 no.125 p.548

<sup>38</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.27

<sup>39</sup> Kornilova-Moroz "Perovskaya..." p.28

<sup>40</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.102

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in V. Bogucharskii *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov* Moscow 1912 p.163

Russian populism at the beginning of the 1870s, independently of their own intentions.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, in spite of the fierceness of the disputes between the two factions, especially in the student colony in Zurich, in some respects Bakunin and Lavrov were not that far apart. After the Paris Commune, in which Lavrov played a part, he claimed that a federation of such communes would be the most complete form of self-government.<sup>43</sup> He also refused accommodation within existing political systems, and reforms aiming at the betterment of capitalist society, and criticised the mostly Jacobin leaders of the Commune for concentrating on political matters and ignoring the economic.<sup>44</sup> Boris Sapir is wrong to state that this viewpoint was peculiar to Lavrov and the populists, however;<sup>45</sup> in fact, when viewed in the context of the Marxist/anarchist split in the International, it should be seen as one of the threads connecting populism and anarchism. Nevertheless, there were important differences between Lavrov and Bakunin. For Lavrov, the defeat of the Commune showed that in order for a revolution to be successful, the people had to have digested fully the notion of the socialist reconstruction of society, and that the degree of a "state element" after the revolution depended on prior organisation and preparation by the educated. He did not believe that socialism could emerge from the workers' situation; it had to be brought in from outside. The people needed guidance to acquire socialist ideals. This represents a difference with Bakunin, for whom economic and historical conditions nurtured an "instinct" for socialism within the masses, which needed only clarification and direction from intellectuals. Thus for Lavrov it was necessary to teach socialist knowledge before the revolution.<sup>46</sup>

Lavrov's influence in Russia stemmed largely from his *Historical Letters*, which J.P. Scanlan has (somewhat over-enthusiastically) called "the handbook and bible of the revolutionary youth of the 1870s".<sup>47</sup> The *Historical Letters* appeared in *Nedelya* in 1868, then as a book at the turn of the decade, and

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<sup>42</sup> P. Pomper *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* Chicago 1972 p.131

<sup>43</sup> B. Sapir "Peter Lavrov" in *International Review of Social History* v.17 1972 p.444

<sup>44</sup> B. Sapir "Peter Lavrov" p.445

<sup>45</sup> B. Sapir "Peter Lavrov" p.445

<sup>46</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.146

<sup>47</sup> P. Lavrov *Historical Letters* California 1967 p.2

were certainly influential for a few years; however as I intend to show, in the Chaikovskii circle, Lavrov was drowned out by Bakunin as the circle became more radical. The central themes of the *Historical Letters* are the role of consciousness and critical thought in history, and from this standpoint, the duties of radical intellectuals. It is a moral appeal to the intelligentsia to alleviate the sufferings of the majority to which it owed its existence.<sup>48</sup> Lavrov sets out his "Formula of Progress" in the third Letter, which is defined as "the physical, intellectual and moral development of the individual, and the incorporation of truth and justice in social institutions".<sup>49</sup> This means a necessary minimum of hygiene and living conditions, the opportunity to develop and defend convictions, general education, and flexibility of social forms to allow them to change as soon as they cease to embody truth and justice. For the majority in Russia, none of these conditions were fulfilled, very few had even the necessary physical conditions to live well, and Russia's institutions were so inflexible that they would have to be destroyed by revolution.<sup>50</sup>

For revolution to occur in Russia, it was necessary for critically thinking individuals to choose as broad a sphere of social activity as possible, to determine which elements of society were to be acted upon, and what tools were available. All institutions, including law, private property and the state, must be subject to critical inquiry. These individuals have to become a social force. When this occurs, they threaten the state's cohesion, because they renounce the fictitious contract, expressed in law, on which the state is founded and which the subjected majority never agreed to. Individuals should constantly prepare themselves therefore by critical inquiry, complete the work of critical thought on culture and repay with thought and action their share of the accumulated cost of progress.<sup>51</sup>

Lavrov's programme captured the moral side of Russian populism, the idea of the debt owed by the educated to the *narod*. It also placed the burden of the transformation of society onto the intelligentsia, who, by their ability to

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<sup>48</sup> Lavrov *Historical Letters* p.45

<sup>49</sup> Lavrov *Historical Letters* p.111

<sup>50</sup> Lavrov *Historical Letters* p.120

<sup>51</sup> Lavrov *Historical Letters* p.329

identify the shortcomings of the current order and freedom from material concerns were the only group capable of so doing. All of this however necessitated much self-preparation in the study of appropriate fields of action and methods of resolving social problems. As such, Lavrov's programme tended to appeal to those who did not wish to give up university, whereas Bakunin's appealed to those who were temperamentally suited to immediate action. Furthermore, as we shall see, the movement in Russia divided along lines of action and preparation/propaganda; this division confused the actual differences between Lavrov and Bakunin, and Lavrovism came to be seen as gradualism and peaceful propaganda, chiefly among the intelligentsia, while Bakuninism was interpreted in Russia as *buntarstvo*, the raising of immediate local rebellions among the peasantry. Lavrov tended to attract gradualist followers; however, he was to break with them in 1876 when he left the journal he had founded, *Vpered!*

### 3-2: The First Programme

For some time links had been pursued by Natanson's circle with groups in the provinces, who had set up similar reading circles and socialist libraries to Natanson's; in January 1871 a congress took place and various programmes of activity were discussed in the hope of achieving some continuity of work across the country. Provincial circles were instructed to send delegates to the congress in St. Petersburg; Moscow sent three, Kiev four, Kharkov one, Odessa one and Kazan one. Natanson's group was represented by seven delegates.<sup>52</sup> According to Miller Natanson's group proposed an immediate strategy of socialist propaganda and the distribution of books among the youth, with the long-term goal of a movement "to the people".<sup>53</sup> Other groups proposed popular schools, or political agitation. However, the only written programme we have from this congress, the *Programma dlya kruzhek samoobrazovaniya i prakticheskoi deyatel'nosti* is ascribed by P. McKinsey, following N.A. Troitskii, to Mark Natanson,<sup>54</sup> while Miller attributes it to the Moscow group.<sup>55</sup> The authorship may

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<sup>52</sup> Miller "Ideological Conflicts" p.6

<sup>53</sup> Miller "Ideological Conflicts" p.7

<sup>54</sup> P.S. McKinsey "From City Workers to Peasantry" in *Slavic Review* v.38 no.4 1979 p.632

not be important; however, the St. Petersburg group was the most influential and the largest of the groups represented at the congress and a programme presented by this group might be expected to carry more weight. For McKinsey this programme is of prime importance; the influences of European socialist literature, the Paris Commune and of worker unrest in the capital turned the attention of students towards organising the working class.<sup>56</sup> The document shows, according to McKinsey, that organising the workers was the plan of the *Chaikovtsy* from the outset, and they were not seen as a channel to the *narod*. Work among the peasants came about incidentally, influenced by the failure of propagandised workers to expand their circles in the towns. The students had in fact been pessimistic about their chances of influencing the peasants.<sup>57</sup>

There are some problems with this argument. Firstly there appears to be no evidence as to the acceptance or otherwise of this programme. It is difficult to imagine groups from a town such as Kiev or Tula accepting a worker-based programme when there was virtually no working class or industry there at the time, as Charushin notes.<sup>58</sup> While this was not the case in St. Petersburg, we know that the circle there had not begun to operate in any organised way among the city workers until at least a year after the congress, and furthermore that this had come about by chance;<sup>59</sup> and in fact constitutionalism was still being discussed, if only to be rejected at a later meeting.<sup>60</sup> Kropotkin tells how, on his joining the circle in 1872, the question of constitutionalism was continually being raised. He offered to agitate for a constitution using his connections at court.<sup>61</sup> This offer was turned down, but the fact that it was made at all surely indicates that the political direction of the circle was still undecided. In fact according to Kropotkin's memoir, the members of the circle were still hotly debating the direction to be given to their activity; some were in favour of socialist propaganda among the educated youth, others thought that the chief

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<sup>55</sup> Miller "Ideological Conflicts" p.7. The program is reproduced in Ya.D.B. "Programma dlya kruzhkov samoobrazovaniya i prakticheskoi deyatel'nosti" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.6 1930 pp.89-106

<sup>56</sup> McKinsey "From City Workers..." p.632

<sup>57</sup> McKinsey "From City Workers..." p.634

<sup>58</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.156

<sup>59</sup> R. Zelnik "Populists and Workers" in *Soviet Studies* v.24 no.2 p.251

<sup>60</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.304

<sup>61</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p. 312

activity should be among the peasants and workers.<sup>62</sup> Therefore it would appear to be difficult to assign a definite political direction to the circle at such an early stage, as McKinsey tries to do.

Furthermore, given the potentially tendentious nature of memoir accounts, which we noted in the introduction, one might have expected to find in the memoirs more emphasis on the urban workers had they been the main target of the circle as McKinsey claims. That is to say, if the students had planned from the outset to organise specifically the urban workers, one might have expected a tendency in memoirs to emphasise this, since as we shall see, it was quite successful, and not the disappointment which McKinsey claims it was; and since there was little success in organising peasants, one might again expect to read that they were second in importance to the workers. The fact that the populist faith in the peasants shines through the memoir literature in spite of this failure suggests to me that urban workers were not seen as the primary target, but rather until they were able to learn from experience of propagandising among the lower classes, the circle as a whole included both workers and peasants in their potential constituency.

The programme is still an important document for all that, demonstrating the influence of Lavrov's ideas within the student circles of the time, as well as incorporating ideas from the European socialist movement on co-operatives, associations and so on. Furthermore it has as its ultimate goal the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a democratic socialist republic.<sup>63</sup> The idea of revolution, albeit as the culmination of a long-term, gradualist programme, is being bandied about in self-education circles at an early stage, signifying perhaps the beginning of their drift to the left over the next couple of years. The author of the programme acknowledges his debt to Lavrov, in acknowledging his formula of progress as the development of the physical, mental and moral character of individuals, and the creation of truth and justice in social forms.<sup>64</sup> The programme stresses the role of critically thinking individuals from the educated classes, the tiny fraction of Russia's population for

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<sup>62</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.307

<sup>63</sup> "Programma dlya kruzchkov..." p.97

<sup>64</sup> "Programma dlya kruzchkov..." p.96

whom mental development was a possibility, in organising a future popular party. It was necessary for the educated to bring new ideas to the masses, to erode respect for old forms, and develop demands for truth and justice. Only then would the "new" elements be able to take on the old and realise their ideals.<sup>65</sup>

The programme recognises three social classes with the potential to be on the side of change - the educated, the workers *and the peasants*.<sup>66</sup> It recognises that different forms of action will be necessary within each of these groups, and some division of labour would be necessary among propaganda circles. The *intelligenty* were to educate workers and the best workers were to form leadership circles acquainted with socialist theory and the workers' movement in the West. (Something like this did in fact take place in St. Petersburg a couple of years later.) Various forms of associations were to be set up - schools, libraries, co-ops, mutual aid funds. Among the peasants, co-ops were to be set up, as were funds, schools and artels for *otkhod* workers. Strikes should be organised on a legal basis, and propaganda on the economic and political forces of society and laws should be spread. The propagandist should have theoretical and practical knowledge, know a trade, and be able to speak in popular language.<sup>67</sup> The immediate task was a study of the peasants, in particular agriculture, peasant social forms and popular language. This is a suggestion which harks back to the early "information gathering" ideas with which Mark Natanson opposed Nechaev's plans for immediate revolutionary action.

The main necessity was the spread of useful knowledge; only the educated, or the semi-educated, could lead a revolution to a successful outcome. It is not difficult to see the ideas of Lavrov here, and Miller claims that in fact this shows the influence of the Lavrov/Bakunin split taking place abroad, as the author of the programme was nailing his colours so firmly to the Lavrovist mast.<sup>68</sup> However there is no evidence of a Bakuninist tendency in the circle as

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<sup>65</sup> "Programma dlya kruzchkov..." p.97

<sup>66</sup> "Programma dlya kruzchkov..." p.98

<sup>67</sup> "Programma dlya kruzchkov..." p.105

<sup>68</sup> Miller "Ideological Conflicts..." p.9

yet, (although Bakuninist groups were beginning to spring up) and in fact the split abroad was not to come to a head until the end of 1872, although obvious ideological and tactical differences existed between the two trends before that. All the same Miller is right to assert that despite memoir accounts of an aversion to programs and manifestos in the Chaikovskii circle, such a tendency was in evidence early on.

#### **4: The *Rabochee delo***

##### **4-1: Contact with the Workers**

As we have seen, work continued among the student youth with the distribution of books (*knizhnoe delo*) and the expansion of the circle in summer 1871. The aim was to unite advanced students and to create a network for study and the distribution of books.<sup>69</sup> Most of the books the circle used at this stage were legal, but the need for a foreign press was felt in 1871, and this was run at first by V. Aleksandrov in Zurich, later being transferred to Geneva under L. Gol'denberg in late 1872/early 1873. Books studied included works by Lavrov, Lasalle, Flerovskii, Chernyshevskii, Dobrolyubov, Owen, Spencer, Darwin, Louis Blanc, and histories of the labour movement in Europe.<sup>70</sup>

Ideology came to the fore again however with the debate over constitutionalism. In the Autumn a meeting took place at the home of one Prof. Tagantsev, which Nikolai Charushin describes in his memoir.<sup>71</sup> The idea of a constitution for Russia was dismissed on ideological and practical grounds after a reading of Lasalle's *On the Essence of a Constitution*. Charushin himself, who had recently been admitted to the circle, put the arguments against fighting for a constitution; the masses would still be exploited under constitutional rule, while the privileged classes were too weak to fight for a constitution and preferred to protect their interests *s zadnego kryl'tsa* under the current system. That left only the intelligentsia, but they were too few in number, and in any case those who were politicised were socialist. Thus there was no social basis to work for a constitution; the only way forward was for the intelligentsia to unite with the popular cause.

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<sup>69</sup> Knowles "The Book Affair..." p.551

<sup>70</sup> Knowles "The Book Affair..." p.551

<sup>71</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* pp. 129-133



When Petr Kropotkin was introduced to the *Chaikovtsy* (the group was now known thus following the arrest of Natanson, who passed on his responsibilities to Nikolai Chaikovskii) by Dmitrii Klements, in early 1872, they were described as "mostly constitutionalists, but open to any honest idea".<sup>72</sup> Judging by the meeting at Tagantsev's, they were not constitutionalists but there were numerous ideological strands in the circle by this point. Different ideas had surfaced within the St. Petersburg group and the various provincial groups, advocating self-education, propaganda among the intelligentsia, propaganda among the masses. Kropotkin's arrival added a further ideological strand. Kropotkin was by now a convinced anarchist, after a protracted period of disaffection with the Tsarist regime had led him eventually to go to Switzerland to learn at first hand about socialism and the International. In his memoirs, he describes how he went at first to the Russian Section, which was headed by Nikolai Utin and adhered to the Marxist wing of the International, but was disappointed by the "wire-pulling" of the leaders in their attempts to pursue political gains in electoral struggles over the economic needs of the members, the workers. A different spirit prevailed in the anarchist Jura Federation, which conformed more closely to Kropotkin's partially-formed ideas, and he returned to Russia an anarchist.<sup>73</sup> However he offered to use his connections to agitate at court for a constitution, an offer which was firmly rejected; constitutionalism was a dead letter for the *Chaikovtsy* by now. Whereas Drago's memoir states that at this time the circle had nothing revolutionary about it,<sup>74</sup> Charushin stresses the importance of agitation among the workers of St. Petersburg, which was just beginning, although *knizhnoe delo* among the intelligentsia continued.<sup>75</sup> This contact with workers, the influence of literature from abroad, events such as the *Nechaevtsy* trial and the Paris Commune, and the influx of more radical members in late 1871/early 1872 (Kravchinskii, Klements, Sinegub, Kropotkin and others) helped to push the Petersburg circle in general

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<sup>72</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.304

<sup>73</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* pp. 276-292

<sup>74</sup> N. Drago "Zapiski starogo narodnika" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.11

<sup>75</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.141. In fact Charushin raises the possibility that the first contact with workers had been made as early as 1870 by Serdyukov, although this appears to have been purely educational and it is not clear what came of this contact.

in a more radical direction and to turn its attentions from self-education and the intelligentsia to the *narod*. This radicalisation necessitated the setting up of a press abroad to produce illegal literature; this was accomplished by Aleksandrov and later L. Gol'denberg in Geneva, and relations were established with smugglers for the transport of literature into Russia. The question of a journal was also raised as early as 1871 according to Charushin; Chernyshevskii, Mikhailovskii and Bervi-Flerovskii were considered as editors. However nothing came of this since Chernyshevskii could not be freed, Mikhailovskii did not wish to throw over his "legal" position, and Bervi was eventually found unsuitable.<sup>76</sup> The latter did however write his *Alphabet of Social Sciences* for the *Chaikovtsy*.

In 1872 contact was made between the *Chaikovtsy* and the workers of the capital; although some contact may have been made earlier, this was in an educational capacity rather than political. It appears in fact that the *Chaikovtsy's* contacts with workers were made in just such an educational way and came about by chance.<sup>77</sup> An industrialist, Zhdanov, invited students to teach his workers basic literacy, arithmetic and so on in evening classes. Before long S. Sinegub and N. Stakhovskii, members of the Chaikovskii circle, got to hear of this and began to teach at the factory. Soon the teaching turned to propaganda and other *Chaikovtsy* joined in, including Charushin and L. Popov. Popov soon tired of "hobnobbing with workers", and Charushin was needed for clandestine book distribution,<sup>78</sup> (according to Charushin's account he was unhappy at working at the invitation of the boss and sought more independent contacts<sup>79</sup>) but Sinegub and Stakhovskii kept up their propaganda for several months. Soon there were several propaganda centres around the capital, in student flats or specially rented apartments, and at the flat of the student Nizovkin, who was close to the *Chaikovtsy*.

During 1872 and 1873 propaganda centres sprang up across the city, in Vyborg, Vasilevskii Island, Nevskaya Zastava, even central areas like

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<sup>76</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.117

<sup>77</sup> Zelnik "Populists and Workers" p.251

<sup>78</sup> Sinegub "Vospominaniya chaikovtsa" *Byloe* 1906 no.8 p.40

<sup>79</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.127

Izmailovskii and Ligovka.<sup>80</sup> The Book Affair, which had been at its height in 1871, lost ground as the *Chaikovtsy* pursued contacts with the workers. By 1873 the *Chaikovtsy* as a group had moved decisively from "cultural work" among the intelligentsia and workers to the broader interests of the *narod*. Shishko recalls asking Kupreyanov in 1872 why he was not taking part in the student movement, to which Kupreyanov replied "Out of a deep indifference to the affair."<sup>81</sup> By the end of 1872 there was hardly anyone in the circle who was not involved in some way with the *rabochee delo*, and in January 1873 a meeting of the Petersburg circle was called to justify and sanctify this as the main activity of the group.<sup>82</sup> The intelligentsia was now seen merely as a recruiting ground for propagandists.

The propaganda among the workers of the capital was varied, and included basic education as well as introducing workers to socialist ideas. Kravchinskii for example taught history and political economy, while Kropotkin taught them about the International and the Paris Commune.<sup>83</sup> The books they used included the stories of Naumov, the best of which, according to Shishko, were a powerful protest against kulakism; Khudyakov's *Drevnyaya Rus'* on the institution of the Veche; brochures on natural history which raised religious questions, and illegal popular books like Chatrian's *Story of a French Peasant*, the *Story of Four Brothers*, which explained exploitation of workers through economic, political and religious means, and histories of Pugachev and Razin. None of these books had a concrete revolutionary programme, but aimed at helping the propagandists to find workers with a generally radical outlook.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4-2: *Fabrichnye* and *Zavodskie*

Within the world of the urban worker however most of the memoir accounts make a strong distinction between the skilled, urbanised workers in heavy industry (*zavodskie*) and unskilled or semi-peasant labour in the textile industries (*fabrichnye*). According to Kropotkin the *fabrichnye* were more

<sup>80</sup> Sh.M. Levin "Kruzhok chaikovtsev i propaganda sredi peterburgskikh rabochikh v nachale 1870kh gg." in *Katorga i ssylka* no.12 1929 p.17

<sup>81</sup> P.L. Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* St. Petersburg 1907 p.186

<sup>82</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.149

<sup>83</sup> L. Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i kruzhok chaikovtsev* n.p. 1902 p.21

<sup>84</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* pp.26-27

receptive to propaganda than the *zavodskie*, who rejected the students and did not themselves become propagandists as hoped.<sup>85</sup> Shishko also notes the division, although he does not comment on the unreceptiveness of the *zavodskie*, noting merely that *zavodskie* workers were more developed than the *fabrichnye*, and some could even read Lasalle independently.<sup>86</sup> However, this division between workers has been questioned by the American historian R. Zelnik, who claims that it may be more a reflection of populist assumptions than experience. The populists' goal was the unspoilt *narod*, but the nearest the St. Petersburg group came was the urban worker. In order to accommodate the fact that the success of their propaganda among the workers ran contrary to their peasant-based ideology, they were forced to equate the *fabrichnye* with peasants and dismiss the *zavodskie* in their writings.<sup>87</sup> The syllogism runs: *fabrichnye*=peasants=receptive to populist propaganda; *zavodskie*=urbanised=hostile to propaganda. Soviet historians have also found this useful in claiming that the *zavodskie* rejected the Populists because of their nascent proletarian class consciousness,<sup>88</sup> and emphasise their "distance" from both peasants and *fabrichnye* workers.<sup>89</sup>

According to Zelnik the sharpness of the divide between *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* at this period is overstated. His studies indicate that in fact an aristocracy of labour existed in the mills as well as the metal shops, and rather than dividing the two sectors vertically, it cut horizontally, dividing better paid and skilled workers from the poorly paid and unskilled in both types of industry. Furthermore, at the time textile work was more stable than engineering and more strike prone; weavers were more likely to be employed long-term in the same place and more likely to take collective action in the workplace. Therefore it is hard to say that *zavodskie* were more urbanised and proletarian.

In fact the *Chaikovtsy* were successful in organising both *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* workers. Some worked with both groups, some worked exclusively

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<sup>85</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p326

<sup>86</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* p.21

<sup>87</sup> Zelnik "Populists and Workers" pp.258-260

<sup>88</sup> See eg. Levin "Kruzhok Chaikovtsev" p.24; R.V. Filippov "Sootnosheniya revolyutsionno-narodnicheskogo i rabocheho dvizheniya v Rossii v 70kh godakh" in *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii* Moscow 1965 p.221

with *zavodskie*.<sup>90</sup> A.V. Nizovkin took over an early educational group of *zavodskie* early in 1872, and on the initiative of the Chaikovets Serdyukov a library was set up, which by autumn of that year was part-funded by a 2% contribution from the wages of its worker members. Kravchinskii and A. Kornilova taught workers there; the circle grew considerably and included future leaders of the workers' movement such as V. Obnorskii and D. Smirnov. A mainly *fabrichnye* group grew up around Sinegub in the Vyborg region, and late in 1872 a further large centre appeared based on workers from the munitions factory on Vasilevskii Island. Kropotkin, in spite of his stated preference for the *fabrichnye*, taught at all of these centres. Lessons were given in literacy, arithmetic, geography, history, as well as lectures and discussions on social and political affairs; the International, Russian history, the German workers' movement.

It is worth noting at this point the parallels in this constituency debate with that in the western socialist movement. As we have seen, the *Chaikovtsy* tried to contact and influence all strands of the working class in St. Petersburg, and had several successful teaching and propaganda groups. Nevertheless, their memoir accounts, which tend towards a preference for the *fabrichnye* and for their peasant connections, betray a similarity to the ideas of the anarchists in Europe. Bakunin, for example, highlighted the anarchists' preference for the poorest and most desperate in a discussion of Italy: "There does not exist in Italy, as in most other European nations, a special category of relatively affluent workers, earning higher wages, boasting of their literary capacities, and so impregnated by a variety of bourgeois prejudices that, excepting income, they differ in no way from the bourgeoisie...In Italy it is the extremely poor proletariat which predominates. Marx speaks disdainfully, but quite unjustly, of this *lumpenproletariat*. For in them, and only in them, and not in the bourgeois strata of workers, are there crystallised the entire intelligence and power of the coming Social Revolution."<sup>91</sup> For the anarchists, as for the *Chaikovtsy*, there was a certain mistrust of the better-paid workers, and a suspicion that they could be

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<sup>89</sup> M. Bortnik "V 70e i 80e gody na trubochnom zavode" in *Krasnaya letopis'* no.2 1928 p.184

<sup>90</sup> Levin "Kruzhok Chaikovtsev" p.16

<sup>91</sup> M. Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" in S. Dolgoff (ed.) *Bakunin on Anarchy* London 1973 pp.333-334

satisfied with making gains within the capitalist system. For Bakunin, revolution is impossible outside of those classes who own little or nothing, property being a strong deterrent to the destruction inherent in revolution.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, as the *Chaikovtsy* and populists generally were beginning to do, the anarchists looked mainly to the poorest workers, the unemployed and the peasants as the force for social revolution.

Memoir accounts have claimed that the goal of the *Chaikovtsy* in their work among the workers was the creation of popular propagandists, largely from the *fabrichnye* who maintained their contact with the countryside.<sup>93</sup> McKinsey has questioned this; she claims that in fact the workers themselves initiated the movement, due to a lack of success in expanding their circles in the city. The uneducated *fabrichnye* were attracted to the students' circles by the chance to learn to read, not by socialism, according to McKinsey. Those who did absorb the propaganda failed to attract new adherents and turned instead to their home villages. This took the *Chaikovtsy* by surprise, and in despair at the departure of valuable propagandists they took factory jobs or accompanied workers to their villages in order to maintain contact with them. In the light of this, McKinsey writes, Kropotkin developed the idea of *fabrichnye* as emissaries to the peasants in late 1873.<sup>94</sup> The example set by those *Chaikovtsy* who went to the villages was the inspiration for the movement to the people of the following year.

In fact the idea of the popular propagandist had been suggested as early as 1869 by L. Gol'denberg, although nothing seems to have come of it at the time.<sup>95</sup> It may well have been the initiative of the workers themselves to become propagandists in the countryside in 1873; but we have seen that the very founding of the Chaikovskii circle was based on the need for information-gathering about the conditions of the peasants, so the peasant question was

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<sup>92</sup> Dolgoff (ed.) *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.334

<sup>93</sup> See eg. Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.146; Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.327

<sup>94</sup> McKinsey "From City Workers" p.643. R. Zelnik has also noted the "craving for learning" among workers of the time; however, he describes the secular and scientific content of the lessons as a cultural confrontation with the workers' cosmology, which of itself shook their religious and monarchical superstitions. R. Zelnik "To the Unaccustomed Eye: Religion and Irreligion in the Experience of St. Petersburg Workers in the 1870s" in *Russian History* v.16 nos.2-4 (1989) pp.320-1

<sup>95</sup> Miller "Ideological Conflicts" p.4

not brought to the attention of the *Chaikovtsy* by failure with the workers. In any case there could surely be no reason for the *Chaikovtsy* to despair over losing contact with the workers; in fact Sinegub and his wife had to call upon the help of Tikhomirov and Stakhovskii because they could not cope with the number of workers wishing to join their circle.<sup>96</sup> Shishko's account backs up McKinsey's assertion that the initiative to go to the villages came from the workers; however he claims that the circle knew from the first that propaganda in the cities would be hard to maintain, and that the question of the peasants would have to be brought forward.<sup>97</sup> He also claims that some members of the circle, like Nikolai Chaikovskii, felt that going to the countryside was damaging a perfectly good workers' movement; Mikhail Frolenko however claims that the *Chaikovtsy* decided to go straight to the villages when arrests began to disrupt the workers' groups in town.<sup>98</sup> Shishko and others stayed in St. Petersburg during 1873, and he backs up Charushin's claim that Sinegub had to call in help for his rapidly expanding circle. On arriving in the capital, Lev Tikhomirov was amazed at the success of propaganda in St. Petersburg, and this propaganda grew significantly over the summer of 1873; just the period when, according to McKinsey, the *Chaikovtsy* were supposed to be despairing over it.

Furthermore several *Chaikovtsy* had themselves gone to the villages before the first of their workers (Krylov); Sinegub had spent several months in the countryside from February 1873, Perovskaya and Obodovskaya had also already been to the countryside.<sup>99</sup> The idea of taking up factory jobs had been raised by Shleisner and Dmitrii Rogachev in 1872.<sup>100</sup> Going to the countryside or taking factory jobs cannot be seen as desperate measures to keep in contact with worker groups therefore. McKinsey claims that the memoir literature is tendentious in claiming that sending *fabrichnye* to propagandise in the country was part of the *Chaikovtsy*'s plan; this is quite possible, since the circle was having to develop tactics and ideas very rapidly and in the course of, not prior to, propaganda work. However, *zavodskie* circles in the city were recruiting new

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<sup>96</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.191

<sup>97</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* p.28

<sup>98</sup> M. Frolenko "Khozhdenie v narod 1874g." in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.10

<sup>99</sup> A. Yakimova "Bol'shoi protsess ili protsess 193kh" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.12 1927 p.11

members, running libraries, mutual aid funds, and even setting up independent study groups; the Vasilevskii Island workers were the first to set up their own group, followed by Nevskaya Zastava.<sup>101</sup> If the *Chaikovtsy* had in fact been in despair at the *fabrichnye* disappearing willy nilly to the villages, while the *zavodskie* circles were going strong, one would expect the memoirs to be more critical of the *fabrichnye* and favourable to the *zavodskie*. Yet the opposite is the case. As we have mentioned above the *Chaikovtsy* in their memoirs have (probably tendentiously) adopted the equation *fabrichnye*-peasants-good, *zavodskie*-urban-bad; while this may be unfair to the apparently successful *zavodskie* groups, surely it must indicate an ideology whose adherents would have greeted a turn to the countryside with enthusiasm, which according to Zelnik they did.<sup>102</sup>

The breakdown in relations with *zavodskie* circles, which McKinsey cites as adding to the distancing of the students from the workers and adding to their despair, actually took place *after* numerous *Chaikovtsy* had begun to travel to the countryside in 1873, and cannot be seen as a motive for them to follow the errant *fabrichnye*. In fact it seems likely, as Zelnik has argued, that the departure of the students was one of the causes of the breakdown of relations between students and *zavodskie*, rather than one of its effects.<sup>103</sup> By 1874 some of the *zavodskie* workers were accusing the students of being no use when it came to action, and refusing to admit them to their meetings. Soviet scholars, and Prof. Venturi, have ascribed the estrangement to a growing proletarian consciousness making it impossible for the workers to tolerate the peasant-based Bakuninism of the students. However Nizovkin was a Bakuninist and yet was still accepted by the workers, and according to Levin Bakunin's "Statism and Anarchy" was a popular addition to the *zavodskie* library.<sup>104</sup> One Soviet author mentions arguments between *buntari* and Lavrovists in early 1874, and cites evidence that Nizovkin encouraged the workers to move away from the *Chaikovtsy*, playing on their desire for an independent proletarian

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<sup>100</sup> Yakimova "Bol'shoi protsess" p.11

<sup>101</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.147

<sup>102</sup> Zelnik "Populists and Workers" p.255

<sup>103</sup> Zelnik "Populists and Workers" p.268



organisation.<sup>105</sup> Zelnik believes the problem had more to do with the behaviour of the *Chaikovtsy* than with their ideology. By late 1873 the most highly propagandised workers were being removed from their artels or living quarters and being housed separately or with students; they were educated to a high level and integrated into the underground movement, and would have seen their circles as the centre of their lives. However the *Chaikovtsy* were starting to drift away to the countryside, leaving the worker groups isolated and resentful. Even harder to accept was the departure of a valued worker-comrade to go with them. The worker Mitrofanov said that when Viktor Obnorskii left with the student Lisovskii the workers felt he had cut himself off from them.<sup>106</sup> We can only speculate whether similar hostility would have developed in the *fabrichnye* circle had it not been broken up by the police.

#### 4-3: Provincial Circles

However, the *Chaikovtsy* did not desert the capital only to go to the countryside; Charushin in particular travelled the length and breadth of European Russia building connections with provincial groups and trying to encourage a common line of action. The St. Petersburg group were certainly the strongest group with the most successful propaganda, but they maintained federal relations with groups in other towns and formally at least cannot be seen as leading the movement. Most work on the *Chaikovtsy* has made little mention of the provincial groups,<sup>107</sup> so we shall examine them briefly here.

The main provincial Chaikovskii groups were in Moscow, Kiev and Odessa, although smaller groups with links to the *Chaikovtsy* existed in Orel, Tula, Kharkov and Kherson. Charushin travelled to all of these destinations in 1873 to try to steer them onto the path of the *rabochee delo*. At the time the Moscow group was not as active as St. Petersburg, although conditions were similar; radicalised students, resident and migrant labour. The focus of Moscow was still on the intelligentsia, the main focus of activity being the University and

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* note to p.192

<sup>105</sup> Bortnik "V 70e i 80e gody" p.187. Bortnik claims that Nizovkin wanted to attract the workers away from the *Chaikovtsy*'s purely "cultural" work towards a more revolutionary-proletarian spirit, only pages after citing the revolutionary content of the *Chaikovtsy*'s propaganda.

<sup>106</sup> Zelnik "Populists and Workers" p.269

<sup>107</sup> See eg. F. Venturi *Roots* ch.18 pp.469-506

the Petrovskaya academy;<sup>108</sup> however, there was no principled opposition to the *rabochee delo*, the question was rather how and where to start. Charushin cites a lack of initiative due to a high turnover of members and a lack of talented leaders.<sup>109</sup> Visits from Kravchinskii, Kropotkin, Klements and Shishko with advice, and contacts with workers, galvanised the group. In his memoirs Kropotkin claims the credit for setting up the Moscow circle but Morozov, Frolenko and Tikhomirov do not corroborate this. However he is credited with later encouraging the Muscovites to limit their contact with workers and prepare for revolutionary action in the countryside by learning a trade.<sup>110</sup>

Kiev was still not an industrial town in the early 1870s and would not appear to have offered much hope for the *rabochee delo*. Nevertheless, it was apparently one of the most revolutionary towns in the 1870s.<sup>111</sup> The Chaikovskist group there managed to contact some workers' artels and begin work among them. An entry point for literature from abroad was also organised in Kiev.<sup>112</sup> According to Yakimova the Kiev group did not distinguish itself particularly;<sup>113</sup> until 1873 they had concentrated on propagandising among students, and they were more interested in learning than their Petersburg colleagues, according to Lavrov.<sup>114</sup> Many Kiev radicals had already left the city in connection with a project for a revolutionary commune in America (which did not come about), which may account for the low level of activity. However Pavel Aksel'rod relates that he and Semen Lur'e were teaching in several workers' artels in 1872 and holding secret meetings outside the city.<sup>115</sup> With Charushin's arrival and the establishment of full links with other groups things began to pick up, and new members were admitted including E. Breshkovskaya. Later the limited scope for activity among workers coupled with increasing contact with émigrés and returnees from Zurich sparked an ideological debate and resulted here as elsewhere in a turn to the countryside. We shall return to this below.

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<sup>108</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov po bol'shomu protsessu" in *Byloe* 1906 no.11 p.31

<sup>109</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.153

<sup>110</sup> M. Miller *Kropotkin* Chicago 1976 p.94

<sup>111</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov" p.33

<sup>112</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.156

<sup>113</sup> Yakimova "Bol'shoi protsess" p.12

<sup>114</sup> Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* p.198

<sup>115</sup> P. Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe* Berlin 1923, p.97

Furthermore, when the two directions in populism (Bakunin and Lavrov) began to become apparent, most of the Kiev *Chaikovtsy* moved closer to the anarchists, of which there was a strong group in the town, centred around the so-called Kiev Commune, a constantly changing household of revolutionaries which acted as a sort of clearing house and HQ for the revolutionary movement in and around Kiev.<sup>116</sup>

Odessa had a large and well-organised circle, largely thanks to the efforts of Feliks Volkhovskii, which was already active among workers as well as students when Charushin arrived. The circle was apparently very serious and very careful, and unusually for the time, something like party discipline was maintained.<sup>117</sup> Odessa was an industrial town and there were a large number of workers' artels. Like Kiev, Odessa also became a smuggling point for literature into South Russia. In the summer of 1873 the group smuggled in a press which had been procured by Kupreyanov and S. Chudnovskii which, however, had to be hidden and could not be put to use. Like their counterparts in the capital the Odessans began by teaching workers literacy and numeracy and moved on to legal then illegal literature. Again the suggestion is made that the artels of the migrant workers were seen as more valuable than work among the *zavodskie*; and again the suggestion of grouping the 8 or 10 outstanding workers into a separate circle was made.<sup>118</sup> Foreign publications were received and the return of the Zurich students brought elements of the Bakunin/Lavrov dispute into the group; the new activities of the Petersburg group encouraged the Odessans to go to the peasants also.

## **5: Bakuninism**

### **5-1: Links with the Émigrés**

As can be seen, similar developments took place in Chaikovskist groups across Russia, either under the influence of developments in the capital or parallel to them. Common to all groups in late 1873 was an ideological dispute along the lines of that between Bakunin and Lavrov in Switzerland; or to be more precise that of Bakuninists and Lavrovists, since the two men were not as

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<sup>116</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov" pp.33-34

<sup>117</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov" p.39

<sup>118</sup> Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* p.218

openly hostile towards each other as their followers were.<sup>119</sup> Until now the *Chaikovtsy* had not adopted a binding programme of ideology and action; several had been proposed as we have seen, but the nature of the group and the memories of the *nechaevshchina* precluded any sort of *ustav*. However the broadening of the movement, the success of propaganda among workers, especially in the capital, the increasing contact with and influence of the émigrés (including the return of the Zurich students), the increasing possibility of a turn to propaganda in the countryside and the proposal for links with an émigré journal all contributed to calls for some sort of programme. The debates surrounding the links with one or other émigré faction and the programme produced by Kropotkin in November 1873 shed light on the rise of ideology within the group (remember that the group had originally been conceived as a circle for self-development, ideologically free apart from a generally socialist outlook) and on the increasing influence of anarchism as the voice of Bakunin began to be heard within Russia.

We have discussed to some degree above the ideas of Lavrov and Bakunin, and how they were perceived in Russia. It appears that the term Bakunist came to be applied to those groups who opted for immediate, violent action in the countryside, *buntarstvo*, and who denied the usefulness of teaching workers literacy or of written or spoken propaganda. Meanwhile Lavrovism came to be seen as peaceful propaganda, especially among the students, gradualism and an extended period of self-improvement and intellectual preparation before embarking on a revolutionary career. According to Kovalik, Bakunist groups answered the questions of the time (such as the readiness of the intelligenty for popular action, the level of revolutionism in the *narod*, the significance of local bunts etc.) on the basis of their desire for immediate and active work among the *narod* rather than on the facts. So for them, the youth were ready to go to the *narod*; the *narod* would not only understand their propaganda but had enough proto-revolutionaries in their midst so that direct agitation was in order rather than mere propaganda; local bunts raised revolutionary feeling; "flying" propaganda was better than settling in one

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<sup>119</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.139

place and so on.<sup>120</sup> Others, like the *Chaikovtsy*, were more careful in considering practical questions. Perhaps curiously, the *Chaikovtsy* ended up in a position which was closer to Bakunin's than the Bakuninist groups were. For example, the latter's denial of propaganda in favour of immediate agitation, and the preference for "flying" as opposed to "settled" propaganda, are contrary to Bakunin's positions on these subjects, as we have seen in Chapter 1.

The question of a journal had been brought up before but remained unresolved due to the lack of a prestigious editor. In 1873 the question arose again, and the suggestion was made of founding a journal with one of the émigrés as editor. At this time the Bakunin/Lavrov dispute was at its height and the *Chaikovtsy* began to take sides and argue over which of the factions to unite with. According to Kropotkin it was decided to send a delegate to meet the groups and report back; originally Dmitrii Klements was to be sent due to his neutrality on the issue. In the event however Kupreyanov was sent, a man of "definitely moderate convictions".<sup>121</sup> Kupreyanov apparently went straight to Lavrov and arranged for the *Chaikovtsy* to distribute the journal *Vpered!* in Russia. Lavrov's programme of gradual and careful intellectual preparation for revolution could not find favour with Kropotkin.

Miller has claimed that Kropotkin was in a minority of one in terms of his views, and that Kupreyanov went straight to Lavrov because he knew that almost none of the circle were interested in Bakunin.<sup>122</sup> While the number of anarchists in the circle is debatable it is nevertheless difficult to see how Kupreyanov could have thought that Lavrov was closer to the views of the circle, given that propaganda among the workers had been going on for a year and a half and had become the main activity of all the Chaikovskyite groups, and that exploration of the peasant milieu had begun. Lavrov's programme for the proposed journal, *Vpered!*, which had been read by the *Chaikovtsy*,<sup>123</sup> put this activity off into the future, while self-preparation and propaganda among the intelligentsia to build up a cadre of socialist intellectuals went on; it was this

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<sup>120</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov" p.66

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Miller *Kropotkin* p.95

<sup>122</sup> Miller *Kropotkin* p.96

<sup>123</sup> Knowles "The Book Affair" p.562

point of the need for an extended period of preparation to teach socialist knowledge and impart a conscious socialist morality which distinguished Lavrov from Bakunin above all. It is difficult to see how the *Chaikovtsy* could have favoured such a programme given the stage they had reached by 1873 with their propaganda among the workers and peasants. One of the problems is that while it is of course reasonable to assume some tendentiousness in Kropotkin's account of the affair, the only opposing evidence seems to be other memoir accounts such as Charushin's.<sup>124</sup>

In fact the idea of linking up with the émigrés to produce a journal seems to have come about earlier than autumn 1873; Lavrov first was approached in March 1872,<sup>125</sup> and when Charushin visited Kiev in Spring 1873 he brought with him a hectographed copy of the *Vpered!* programme, which Aksel'rod felt was too mild.<sup>126</sup> It seems that three programs were actually drawn up, the first being rejected as too moderate; the second was written in Autumn 1872 by Lavrov when it seemed that the journal could be produced in collaboration with the Bakuninists in Zurich.<sup>127</sup> Relations broke down between the two émigré factions over editorship, however, and a third and final programme was produced by Lavrov and smuggled hurriedly into Russia. With all this in mind it is possible that in fact Kupreyanov went to Lavrov's group to finalise arrangements which had been made for an émigré journal the year before, and not because he felt that the Chaikovskii circle was currently more Lavrovist. The fact that the journal was to have been produced jointly by Lavrovists and Bakuninists, until the latter pulled out, surely indicates that the *Chaikovtsy* merely wanted a journal produced abroad with a prestigious editor, and not necessarily a Lavrovist journal as such. This scenario deprives Kupreyanov's failure to contact Bakunin of some of its ideological content.

*Vpered!* was eagerly awaited in Russia but when it arrived it was a disappointment to most *Chaikovtsy*, which was evidence of the ideological

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<sup>124</sup> Charushin's ideological position is hard to fathom; Kropotkin, Kovalik, Chudnovskii and Aksel'rod all have him down as at the radical end of the *Chaikovtsy*'s ideological spectrum; Charushin himself claims to have been more moderate and pushes a moderate line in his memoirs.

<sup>125</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.132

<sup>126</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.101

<sup>127</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.136

distance the circle had travelled since its foundation. According to Shishko, "*Vpered!* made no noticeable impact on our mood or our tasks. The insistence of *Vpered!* on long preparation for propaganda among the *narod* contradicted the impassioned and irrepressible desire among the youth of the time for revolutionary action; thus the Bakuninist publication "*Statism and Anarchy*" met with great sympathy."<sup>128</sup> It is perhaps significant that this quote is reproduced by Lavrov himself in his book on the period; Philip Pomper agrees that Lavrov had misjudged the mood in Russia; the youth interpreted his programme as calling for an extended period of self-education, demanding too much study and too little devotion to the *narod*.<sup>129</sup>

Activity among the workers in 1872 and the beginnings of a move to the peasants in 1873 do not seem to have come about under the direct influence of the émigrés or of even of a particular ideology; however, now that the issues of a programme, journal and formal links with the émigrés had arisen it had to be admitted that by Autumn 1873 Lavrovism no longer corresponded with the activities of the circle and Bakunin's call to break with "society" and go to the people was probably closer. The *Chaikovtsy's* preference for the *fabrichnye* workers and peasants as their constituency corresponded to Bakunin's position in *Statism and Anarchy*. Furthermore, the organisational form of a federated network of revolutionary cells within the *narod*, based on complete trust and solidarity put forward by Bakunin was not far from what they were trying to achieve, given that they had such an organisation already and were trying to find a way into the *narod*. Their programme of propaganda and agitation, while not shying away from the possibility of a revolution in the near future as the Lavrovists did, was probably closer to Bakunin's actual position than the *buntari* or Rebels who claimed to act in his name. While I am not trying to claim that the circle was completely Bakuninist, their activities were drawing closer to Bakunin's programme, and the appearance in Russia of *Statism and Anarchy* did meet with a sympathy which contradicts Miller's assertion that Kropotkin was alone in his radical views. In Kiev Aksel'rod came to support Bakunin, and

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<sup>128</sup> Quoted in Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* p.187

<sup>129</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.149

claims in his memoirs that Bakunin's ideas chimed with the radical youth of the day. Lavrovism seemed to be a deviation; it did not answer the need to break with society, and was unclear in its attitude to the state.<sup>130</sup> There were regroupings among the Kiev *Chaikovtsy*; some joined Debagorii-Mokrievich's anarchist group.<sup>131</sup> Aksel'rod even acted on Bakunin's praise for the Russian bandit tradition by setting off to seek out a bandit who was active in the countryside around Kiev. (They failed to find him, which was probably fortunate.) Kovalik's anarchist group in St. Petersburg had strong connections with the *Chaikovtsy*<sup>132</sup> and while Kablits' group earned the ironic nickname of "Vspyshkopuskateli" for their denial of the usefulness even of literacy in favour of sparking immediate *bunty* in the villages, they were the extreme fringe of the anarchist groupings, and many *Chaikovtsy* joined alongside anarchists the workshops which were springing up in the capital, to learn a trade in preparation for a movement "to the people".<sup>133</sup>

## 5-2: Kropotkin's Programme

In the light of the activities of the circle and the growing influence of anarchism by the end of 1873 it is likely that Kropotkin felt he could push through a radical programme when the issue came up.<sup>134</sup> It is not clear from the evidence whether Kropotkin was selected to write the programme or took it upon himself; according to Shishko he was selected by the circle.<sup>135</sup> Either way the result was far more radical than the *Programma dlya kruzhek...* of 1871. In the first part, Kropotkin examines the ideal of equality as the basis for a future society and proposes common (not state) ownership of the means of production. All private property would become the property of local social units and social capital, that is the land, the factories and so on, the property of those

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<sup>130</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.112

<sup>131</sup> Debagorii had met Bakunin in Switzerland and like F. Lermontov and S. Kovalik, had returned to Russia to set up an anarchist organisation.

<sup>132</sup> Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* p.228

<sup>133</sup> Kablits' group had broken away from Kovalik's. Interestingly Kablits claimed that by remaining at university students were amassing "intellectual capital"; the idea was dismissed at the time but has been adopted since in radical evaluations of Russian history. See eg. R. Gombin *The Radical Tradition* London 1978; see also M. Djilas *The New Class* New York 1974

<sup>134</sup> P.A. Kropotkin "Dolzhny li my zanyat'sya rassmotreniem ideala budushchego stroya?" in *Byloe* no.17 1921. This version is the one presented by the police to the Council of Ministers and is slightly shortened. The original appears in B.S. Itenberg (ed.) *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.1 Moscow 1964 pp.55-118

<sup>135</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* p.33



who work them. Work should also be made egalitarian, with no privileged labour of managers and intellectuals, and an end to the division of field, factory and mental labour. In education there should be no distinction between practical and intellectual work, and all should be free to learn and perform manual and intellectual tasks. Finally Kropotkin dismisses the idea of representative government; the essence of any government, he claims, is that communities are deprived of the right to decide certain of their affairs, this power being given over to a few. The tendency of such organisations to expand their sphere of influence leads inevitably to hierarchy and centralisation. This defect is at the very heart of government systems and is not amenable to reform; Kropotkin follows Bakunin in claiming that any group given power tries to broaden it and retain it. Kropotkin proposes self-government in a system of small federated settlements. All this can only be achieved by social revolution. This part of the manifesto was apparently received by the *Chaikovtsy* without argument, reflecting both the influence of anarchism in their ideas, and the fact the differences among them were about means, not ends.<sup>136</sup>

The second part of the manifesto tackles the practical problems facing the revolutionaries. Kropotkin writes that the revolutionary party cannot make the revolution but only hasten and help it. This is a rejection of Jacobinism and political struggle. The most fundamental problem it deals with however is where to direct propaganda. Kropotkin believes that the answer has to be to the *narod*. The intelligentsia is for the most part too attached to its privileges. Revolutionaries must therefore abandon the institutions and values of the past and live the life of the common man. The purpose of this is the creation of agitators from among the people. Circles of workers should be formed to train agitators, who will in turn form their own circles in towns and villages. The task of the intelligentsia revolutionaries is not to create the revolution; no revolution is possible if it is not felt by the *narod* to be the only way out of their predicament. The task of the intelligentsia is merely to organise, to connect elements of discontent, to unite groups with others and to show the causes of the people's discontent and who the real enemies are. The influence of Bakunin

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<sup>136</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.205

is obvious here. Armed peasant *druzhiny* should be set up in preparation for a general rising. Artels should not be used as propaganda centres as they are too closely tied to the present structure; communes for workers should be set up instead. Strikes are rejected as a tactic; only if faced with a strike situation should the revolutionary lend support. Finally, Kropotkin concludes that while the group was in agreement with the federalist wing of the International they intended to develop independently for the time being, as the émigrés could not be fully conversant with the situation inside Russia.

As can be seen by comparing the main points of this document with the ideas of Bakunin as discussed in Chapter 1, the document is so close to the ideas of Bakunin that its acceptance by the Chaikovskii circle would have to be seen as a decisive ideological statement in favour of Bakuninist anarchism. Unfortunately, the acceptance or otherwise of this programme cannot be proven. N. Chaikovskii writes that it was accepted with changes, Shishko that it was accepted by the Petersburg circle and was being considered by other groups.<sup>137</sup> Kornilova-Moroz and Charushin deny that it was accepted at all.<sup>138</sup> Kropotkin himself claims that it was accepted after "thunderous discussion".<sup>139</sup> Thus it is difficult to place the manifesto and Kropotkin the anarchist in the spectrum of ideas which the Chaikovskii circle was able to entertain. According to Charushin the ideas of peasant *druzhiny* and *buntarstvo* were strongly disputed; this may however reflect the ideological disputes of the time, which as we have seen were very much polarised into propaganda vs. *buntarstvo*; the *Chaikovtsy* valued propaganda and any call to raise bunts could have been seen as an attack on that position. Kropotkin in fact supported both propaganda and *buntarstvo*; furthermore the latter could be seen as a form of propaganda even if a bunt failed. This is similar to Bakunin's ideas on propaganda by deed; speaking to the anarchist-populist V. Debagorii-Mokrievich in Italy in 1874, Bakunin said that "we must make unceasing revolutionary attempts, even if we are beaten...one, two, ten, even twenty times; but if on the twenty-first time the people support us by taking part in our revolution, we shall have been paid for

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<sup>137</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* p.31

<sup>138</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* p.212

<sup>139</sup> Miller *Kropotkin* note to page 106

all the sacrifices."<sup>140</sup> Although it is impossible to prove whether or not the circle accepted Kropotkin's programme, there had been a *de facto* shift in the activities and ideas of the circle as a whole away from Lavrovism and towards Bakuninism, including increasingly close ties with the Bakuninist groups in Russia and joint participation in the workshops which began to spring up so that propagandists could learn a trade to take to the countryside with them, and an attempt to create a joint fund.<sup>141</sup> Kropotkin must have felt that the ideological ground had shifted far enough to make the acceptance of his radical programme possible.

### 5-3: The Decline of the Circle

In late 1873 began the series of arrests which was to paralyse the work of the circle. In St. Petersburg the Nevskaya Zastava group was the first to fall, although work was continued by some of the advanced workers like Petr Alekseev. The independent workers' circle set up a mutual aid fund in response to help those unable to work because of involvement in political affairs. L. Popov, A. Kornilova and S. Perovskaya were arrested at the end of the year. In Kiev, repressions broke up the group early in 1874, and in March the Vyborg and Vasilevskii Island groups in the capital were broken up, and Kropotkin, Kupreyanov, Serdyukov and others were arrested. New members were brought in - N. Drago, V. Perovskii and others. When Tsvilenev joined in Autumn 1874 his first meeting included A. Obodovskaya, A. Epshtein, S. Kravchinskii and N. Drago.<sup>142</sup> Other groups also continued to exist, although practical work was minimal. N. Morozov attended a meeting of 15 in Moscow. Evidence from Vera Figner indicates new members joining in 1875 or even 1876. Morozov claims to have heard from Kravchinskii that the circle was formally liquidated in 1875, but a letter from Kravchinskii appears to indicate an active circle in Autumn 1875. The letter concerns apparent attempts to unite with Lavrovists initiated by Mark Natanson that year, which came to naught due to opposition from the

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<sup>140</sup> N. Pernicone *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* Princeton 1993 p.84

<sup>141</sup> Kovalik "Dvizhenie 70kh godov" p.61

<sup>142</sup> Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* note to page 221. Much of what follows is taken from the lengthy notes to pages 221 and 222.

*Chaikovtsy*. There were apparently also attempts to unite with the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation in Moscow, which again did not take place.

As the *Zemlya i volya* project gathered pace in the second half of 1876, some *Chaikovtsy* (Ivanchin-Pisarev, Drago, Bogdanovich and others) worked out a similar programme of action; however most *Chaikovtsy* did not join *Zemlya i volya* due to disagreements about its organisation, sticking to the principle of moral and personal ties rather than group discipline. However *Zemlya i volya* captured the new mood and grew, while of the others only a small group remained around Vera Figner. The last attempt to revive the Chaikovskii circle came in 1878, when acquittals from the Trial of the 193 released many activists. A group of about 40 formed, including many veterans like Klements, Kravchinskii, Figner, Andrei Franzholi, Perovskaya and Tikhomirov, but it did not last and did not achieve any practical action.

## **6: Conclusion**

The Chaikovskii circle laid the foundations for working class organisation in Russia as well as the movement "to the people" of 1874. Their rapid shift from a circle of self-education through Lavrovist propaganda among the intelligentsia to revolutionary agitation among workers and peasants is indicative of the desire for practical revolutionary action among the radical youth of the time, and of the search for an ideology and programme to justify and organise that action. For this they looked to the émigrés, first to Lavrov, then to Bakunin. However their work was not dictated by any programme, rather the projects for programs were dictated by experience and by the mood of the times.

From the above perhaps the most striking element in the development of the Chaikovskii circle is its rapidity. From its beginnings as a student self-education circle in 1869, by 1873 it had become a near-anarchist revolutionary propaganda circle. However it is important to remember that the ideas and activities of the circle were not dictated by the two main factions in the émigré colony in Zurich, those of Bakunin and Lavrov; rather as the circle developed into a propaganda group and began to distribute books and socialist literature among the students, encouraging them to organise into their own groups,

parallels with Lavrov's ideas became obvious. Nevertheless, by the time the question of a journal had been resolved, Lavrov's programme proved far too mild for the *Chaikovtsy*, and Bakunin's more radical ideas, as set out in *Statism and Anarchy*, had a far greater appeal. Under these conditions, Kropotkin, whom Pomper calls the head of a Bakunist faction in the Chaikovskii circle,<sup>143</sup> and not a minority of one as Miller claims, felt able to put forward a programme which was essentially Bakunist.

It would seem that ideologically the group was far from homogeneous; as Shishko states, the circle was not so much a meeting of theoretical views as a dedication to serving the popular cause, and there were significant differences of opinion.<sup>144</sup> It would appear that in many ways the group defined itself by what it was not, or in opposition to other groups existing at the time. For example the main thing we can say about the group from its beginning is that it set out not to be Nechaevist; over the next couple of years it did not go along with the so-called *vspyshkopuskateli* who wanted to start immediate bunts in the countryside; and by the time of the arrival in Russia of *Vpered!* it was no longer Lavrovist. The influences in this rapid shift leftwards in the circle are numerous; news of the Paris Commune and the International in Europe, the influx of already radicalised members such as Kravchinskii, Kropotkin and Klements, contact with the working class of St. Petersburg and elsewhere. However, while the circle cannot be said to have been Bakunist either, it serves as a good example of the way Bakunin's ideas came to be more broadly accepted in the Russian revolutionary movement in the first few years of the 1870s, as groups like the *Chaikovtsy* realised that their activities and programme were in fact not far from those of Bakunin, once Bakunist literature actually started to arrive from abroad in the form of *Statism and Anarchy*. The predominance of Bakuninism in the movement in Russia was to continue for the next few years, until a new tendency which favoured a political struggle with the autocracy superseded it.

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<sup>143</sup> Pomper *Peter Lavrov* p.151

<sup>144</sup> Shishko *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii* p.11

## Chapter 3: Anarchist Émigrés. Z.K. Ralli and the "Young Bakuninists"

### 1: Introduction

In the previous chapter it was argued that the most influential populist group in Russia in the early 1870s, the Chaikovskii circle, came to find itself in a position basically similar to that of Bakunin and the anarchists in Europe, and that the debates which took place within the group echoed those in the European socialist movement. This chapter will follow on from those arguments by turning to a circle of Russian émigrés in Switzerland who were explicitly Bakuninist. This group were known as the Young Bakuninists, for their affiliation to Bakunin; when relations with him broke down they took the name of Revolutionary Commune (*obshchina*) of Russian Anarchists. Although they took part in the politics of the First International under Bakunin's tutelage, and in the activities of the Russian emigration in Switzerland and the colony of Russian students in Zurich, the main activity of this group from 1873 was focused on the growing revolutionary movement in Russia. As such they form one of the few physical links between Bakunin and the populist movement. Their main influence on the movement in Russia came in the wake of the mass arrests of propagandists in 1874, as they tried to revive activity in Russia and encourage it in a Bakuninist direction with a steady flow of anarchist propaganda. Since the "soul" of the group, in Pavel Aksel'rod's words, was Z.K. Ralli,<sup>1</sup> and since it was he who produced much of the group's written propaganda, and finally since little information about the other members of the group is available, the study will focus on him.

The first section of the chapter, after a brief sketch of Ralli's early life, will look at his involvement with Sergei Nechaev and the Jacobin wing of the student movement in Russia at the end of the 1860s, and Ralli's subsequent emigration to Switzerland and conversion to Bakunin's anarchism. However the main body of the chapter will focus above all on the period from 1873 when the group broke with Bakunin and formed an independent anarchist group whose attentions were mainly on Russia and the revolutionary

movement there. Links between the group and the remains of the Chaikovskii circle will be mentioned, as well as their connections with the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation. I shall also examine the group's propaganda, written for the movement in Russia, and their attempts to adapt Bakuninist anarchism to the populist movement, or at least, their perceptions of the populist movement. I intend also to discuss the various other pamphlets produced by the group, and a book written by Ralli, *Sytie i golodnye*, with the aim of examining the group's ideas on peasant monarchism, religion, the role of the intelligentsia in the revolutionary movement and their interpretation of the movement *v narod* of 1873-4.

In taking a detailed look at the newspaper the group produced for a year during 1875, the *Rabotnik*, I aim to establish the constituency in Russia that the group hoped to influence, the tactics and organisation they hoped to inspire, and their attempts to deal with the phenomenon of popular monarchism in Russia. Also of interest is their attempt through *Rabotnik* to give the movement in Russia an international dimension by linking the problems faced by Russian workers and peasants with those faced by their Western European counterparts, and to use the International as an example and inspiration for the Russian *narod*. Finally, I intend to look at a periodical which the group produced a few years later in 1878, *Obshchina*, which deals with such issues as political assassinations and "propaganda by deed" in Europe as well as the movement in Russia, and attempts to overcome the damaging divisions among the Russian émigré revolutionaries.

## **2: Z.K. Ralli: Early Life and Emigration**

### **2-1: Jacobinism**

Zemfirii Konstantinovich Ralli is not a well-known figure in the Russian revolutionary movement. He left Russia after involvement in the Nechaev affair, and once settled abroad in the Russian colony in Switzerland, he did not become a theoretician or leader in the European revolutionary movement or International, unlike some of his compatriots. What he did do however was to work tirelessly attempting to transport the ideas and programme of

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<sup>1</sup> P. Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe* Berlin 1923 p.141

Bakunin's revolutionary anarchism into Russia. He was one of the few personal links between Russian populism and anarchism and this is what makes him worthy of study. In studying Ralli's activities and propaganda, the groups he was involved with within Russia and in Switzerland, we obtain indications that the Russian movement in the wake of 1874 did not in fact try to adopt a more specifically proletarian working-class character, as Venturi's account seems to suggest,<sup>2</sup> but at least in theory was still trying to retain its Bakuninist orientation towards poorer workers *and* peasants.

Ralli was born in 1847 in Bessarabia, the son of a merchant. After completing his studies at the *gimnaziya* in Kishinev, he went to Moscow University, whence he transferred to the Medico-Surgical Academy of St. Petersburg in 1867. Here he began his revolutionary career in the student disorders of the late 1860s. In 1868, Ralli was living with a group of students from the Medico-Surgical Academy. Student meetings took place at the flat, which were attended by students of other institutions as well as the Academy. In particular seminarists were well represented.<sup>3</sup> The students were on good terms with the nearby workers' artels, helping them out with medical assistance and reading and writing services.<sup>4</sup> The *kruzhok* included Chubarov, who transported Bakunin's *Narodnoe delo* into Russia.<sup>5</sup> The circle was beginning to extend its efforts beyond the university, spreading books among the workers, as well as being a centre for the student protests. Among those who heard about the meetings, the circle and the illegal literature at Ralli's flat was Sergei Nechaev.

Nechaev aimed to strengthen and broaden the student movement and suggested bringing in other educational institutions. Soon meetings began at Nechaev's flat, where the group read works by Rochefort, Robert Owen and Buonarroti among others.<sup>6</sup> The latter's book on the Babeuf conspiracy had a strong influence on Ralli and the others, and they decided to form a political society. The Decembrists, the Petrashevtsy and Khudyakov's tales of a secret

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<sup>2</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 pp.528-535

<sup>3</sup> Z.K. Ralli "Sergei Gennadievch Nechaev" in *Byloe* No. 7 1906 p.136

<sup>4</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p.136

<sup>5</sup> J. Meijer *The Russian Colony in Zuerich* (sic) Assen 1955 p.39



society abroad were favourite topics of conversation; from this it can be seen that the circle tended very much towards conspiratorial secret societies in the Jacobin mould as the instigators of revolution. However, Ralli relates that they had to give up on reading Louis Blanc's history of the French revolution because of Nechaev's poor French.

The meetings at Nechaev's flat continued to the end of the year, but when the student movement took off at the start of 1869 the focus shifted back to the purely student meetings which were still taking place at Ralli's.<sup>7</sup> In February 1869 Nechaev invited Ralli to a meeting with Petr Nikitich Tkachev, with the aim of securing support from radical writers for the student movement. Ralli was asked to remain behind afterwards, when Tkachev proposed the formation of a committee to lead the movement, hoping to draw in the other university towns. However by the time the three met again, this had already taken place as the unrest spread spontaneously to Moscow and elsewhere. The group sent delegations to the other towns to unite the movement; Ralli went with L. Nikiforov to Moscow. To the students of the Petrovskaya Akademiya he proposed raising a movement for the right to hold meetings, to raise mutual aid funds and to organise libraries. However more radical topics such as Ishutin's *Organisation* and Karakozov were also discussed.<sup>8</sup> A sub-committee was set up in Moscow from the group around Uspenskii, which included Ivanov, the student later to be murdered by Nechaev's followers. With Tkachev, Ralli and his colleagues worked out plans for directing the disorders with the ultimate aim of sparking a revolution. A "Programme of Revolutionary Action" was drawn up, which demanded unconditional obedience and discipline. It was essentially a Jacobin and Blanquist programme, with a political revolution and seizure of power seen as preconditions for the social revolution.<sup>9</sup> The organisation was to be based on small circles of five or six, whom the organiser selected from his acquaintances. These circles would keep their activities secret from all except

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<sup>6</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p.137

<sup>7</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p.139

<sup>8</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p. 140

<sup>9</sup> M. Confino *Violence dans la Violence; le débat Bakounine-Nechaev* Paris 1973 p.43

themselves and the central circle; thus a strongly centralist organisation was envisaged.<sup>10</sup> The aim of the organisation was not to create (by persuasion or propaganda) revolutionary forces but to unite those that already existed. "Second level" circles could also be created by already existing circles, who would act in turn as their centres. Individuals were subject to the will of the majority, and could only leave a circle to move nearer to the centre of the organisation. They were to look upon themselves as tools for the accomplishment of the goals of the society.<sup>11</sup> The programme also proposes the creation of "revolutionary types", exceptional men who would renounce possessions, occupation, and family for the revolutionary cause, in whom everything is subsumed into one interest, one thought, one passion - the revolution.<sup>12</sup> Members of the second and third level circles were to be looked on as expendable capital, from whom the maximum revolutionary value was to be obtained. The revolutionary participated in the world of the state, classes and educated society only with a view to its destruction. Society was divided into several categories; firstly, those condemned to death, not however on the basis of their wickedness or the hatred they inspire, but purely on the usefulness of their death to the revolutionary society. The second category was those who would be allowed to live for a while, since their wickedness would encourage rebellion among the people. The third category consisted of the numerous unremarkable people who could be entrapped, blackmailed and by virtue of their wealth or position, used for various undertakings. The fourth was liberals, with whom the revolutionary could conspire as if following them blindly, but all the while finding out their secrets and ways to compromise and enslave them. Next came the doctrinaires, revolutionaries on paper, who must be pushed into real revolutionary activities, the result being that most would perish while some would become real revolutionaries.

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<sup>10</sup> The "Programme of Revolutionary Action", as it was known, appeared in the *stenograficheski otchet* of the trial of the Nechaevists, and thus in the *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*. This in turn is reprinted in B. Bazilevskii *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya v Rossii v XIX veke* SPb. 1906 v.1 pp.182-186

<sup>11</sup> *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya* v.1 p.183

The programme reserved a category for women, who were subdivided into smaller categories. The dull and empty-headed could be used much as the third and fourth category of men; others, able and fiery but who had not achieved a passionless and factual revolutionary understanding, could be used like men of the fifth category; finally, women who were completely dedicated to the programme should be looked on as the greatest treasure, whom it was impossible to do without.<sup>13</sup> While it is worth remarking on the dubious egalitarianism of a programme that allows non-revolutionary women to be equally badly treated as men, it should also be noted that the implication is that the only worthwhile activity for radical women was in the revolutionary society. In the context of the tension, addressed in the previous chapter, between feminism and revolutionism among radical women in Russia at this time, this programme is entirely unambiguous in its prescription for the action women should take: only women dedicated to the revolution were of any value.

The organisation decided that action was to be directed first to the university towns, then to the provincial centres, and finally to the peasants.<sup>14</sup> Even a date was set for the unleashing of the social revolution: February 19, 1870, when the old relations between serf and landlord finally ended and peasants had to start paying for their land. The group's plans rested on the belief that the peasants would not tolerate this.

By early 1869 all the higher education institutes of the capital were involved in the student unrest. However cracks began to appear in spite of Ralli, Nechaev and Tkachev's call for discipline. Disputes arose over whether to continue in *kruzhki* or form a single centralised movement. There was disquiet from some of the Medico-Surgical Academy students who already enjoyed some of the rights others were fighting for. Furthermore some women students feared that the unrest would lead to their precarious right to study at

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<sup>12</sup> *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya* v.1 p.184. Confino notes the similarity between this and the ideas expressed in the later *Catechism of the Revolutionary* in support of his argument that Nechaev, and not Bakunin, wrote the latter document.

<sup>13</sup> *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya* v.1 p.185

<sup>14</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.40

the Alarchin courses being removed.<sup>15</sup> Here we see unfolding the division which Vera Zasulich noted in the student movement between moderates, who were in the majority, and radicals following Nechaev.<sup>16</sup> At this stage therefore it is reasonable to conclude that by radical was meant Jacobin, although it is probably true that a lot of Nechaev's followers did not have too clear an idea of what they were involved in. As we saw in the previous chapter, the divisions ran along the lines of immediate revolutionary action as proposed by the radicals, versus self-preparation and propaganda of progressive ideas as proposed by the likes of Mark Natanson and the Chaikovskii circle. Ralli writes that he was criticised by the more moderate elements because the radicals with their revolutionary demands would endanger the student movement.<sup>17</sup>

With the arrest of the Nechaevtsy and the exposure of Nechaev's methods, Jacobinism in Russia lost its appeal. Radicalism and the need for action however did not, and as we have seen, the moderates of the Chaikovskii circle soon came to adopt a radical position which, in the 1870s, was associated with the ideas of Bakunin rather than Nechaev, of action on a broad social basis rather than in Machiavellism and conspiracy. The overall picture which would develop in the 1870s is not therefore simply one of two tendencies in populism, of moderate propaganda and peaceful means, as opposed to raising immediate revolutionary violence. At the radical end of populism, a number of tendencies competed, and there were important qualitative differences between them with regard to how they proposed to accomplish revolution, which classes of society were to accomplish it, how they should be organised and so on. Nechaev's methods were for now discredited, although elements of them would return in the late 1870s as attention turned to small-group terrorism.

The government reaction to the Nechaev conspiracy began in March 1869, resulting in the arrest of most activists. Ralli was among those arrested. Although no evidence was found against him he spent a month in jail and was

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<sup>15</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p.141

<sup>16</sup> See above Chapter 2 p.4

<sup>17</sup> Ralli "Nechaev" p.141

excluded from higher education and exiled to Kishinev. In May he was arrested again and sent back to St. Petersburg where he was kept in solitary confinement for two months before being transferred to the Peter-Paul fortress, where he remained until Autumn 1871. Once again he was sentenced to administrative exile to his home province. On this occasion however Ralli decided to leave the country, and he crossed the border with a false passport.

## 2-2: Emigration and Bakuninism

According to Jan Meijer, Ralli did not originally intend going to Zurich; he was heading for Geneva to restore his health, having contracted rheumatism in prison.<sup>18</sup> He met up with three other Russians, V. Smirnov, V. Gol'shtein and A. El'snits, who had left for Zurich University after a protest against incompetent teaching at Moscow which had led to numerous expulsions. Ralli decided to continue his interrupted studies and enrolled at Zurich University.

However it was not long before Ralli was once again involved with the revolutionary movement. After a trip to Italy, he visited Bakunin at Locarno, finding the veteran anarchist severely agitated by his brush with Nechaev and consequently wary of the latter's acquaintances, insisting that Ralli and his friends break formally with him; however, in a later meeting Bakunin did not repeat this demand. According to G. Turski, Ralli, El'snits, Gol'shtein and the Serb Manujlo Hrvacanin had formed a discussion group with jacobinist leanings and wanted to organise the movement in Russia.<sup>19</sup> If this is true than it would seem that Ralli had still not discarded the earlier influence of Buonarroti and Babeuf on his ideas. The group apparently hoped to win over Bakunin to their cause;<sup>20</sup> this would seem to imply that Bakunin's anarchist programme was not widely known or understood in Russia as yet, perhaps due to Nechaev's deceptions and misrepresentations. In the event, it was Bakunin who won the young revolutionaries over; his diary for March 27 1872 notes a pact concluded with the Russians, and on April 1, a programme and

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<sup>18</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.155

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Meijer *Russian Colony* note 8 to p.86

<sup>20</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.86

statutes for an organisation.<sup>21</sup> This was the founding of the Russian Brotherhood. Its programme consisted of the ending of all state activity and its replacement by communes, federated to provide social services. Its aim was to form a "general staff" of a few hundred devoted and energetic people who would help to unify the revolutionary actions of the autonomous local sections; in other words, the classic Bakuninist programme, along the lines outlined in Chapter 1. Nechaev was however still at large in Switzerland, and continued to try to draw Ralli back into his conspiracies;<sup>22</sup> although Ralli allowed Nechaev to lodge with him for a time (much to Bakunin's chagrin), it would seem that like the rest of the émigrés, he had by now learned not to trust Nechaev. The latter was more or less isolated among the emigration.

The Brotherhood did not in fact become a widespread organisation; in fact it would soon break up in personal acrimony. Ralli and his comrades could not stomach the attitude of Arman Ross (pseudonym of Mikhail Sazhin), who considered himself Bakunin's lieutenant and resented his intimacy with his new friends. Bakunin tried to ease the difficulties, speaking in a letter to Ralli of Ross' devotion to the cause, and explaining that Ross was critical of El'snits and Gol'shtein for not giving up their studies.<sup>23</sup> For a while problems were held in check. More difficulties arose when Nechaev came to lodge with Ralli; Bakunin demanded that Ralli split with Nechaev, but eventually it was agreed that they could maintain purely personal relations. In any case, Nechaev soon left for Le Chaux-de-Fonds, returning later that year.

Ralli visited the congress of the Jura Federation at Le Locle in May, and according to Jan Meijer, came away much impressed. However, a letter from Bakunin to Ralli speaks of the latter's dissatisfaction with the Jura congress.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless he was by now fully converted to Bakuninism and the Federalist International, as Kropotkin had been the previous year. He, El'snits and Gol'shtein tried to spread anarchism among their compatriots and other Slavs, especially Serbs and Poles, of whom there were many in

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<sup>21</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.87

<sup>22</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.62

<sup>23</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.88

<sup>24</sup> "Pis'mo k Z.K. Ralli 28 maya 1872" in *Archives Bakounines V* p.213

Switzerland at the time. The fact that Ralli was called upon to make a speech at the congress of the "Polish Union for Fraternal Aid" testifies to the headway they made.<sup>25</sup>

They also joined, at Bakunin's behest, the Polish Social Democratic Society, to fight the influence of the Marxist Greulich and try to get the society into the International. However with a Bakuninist programme, which they managed to get accepted, this was highly unlikely given the conflict between the anarchist wing of the International and the mainly Marxist General Council. In a memoir account, Ralli apparently claims that he, El'snits and Gol'shtein actually founded the Society;<sup>26</sup> Ross however dismisses this as pure fantasy.<sup>27</sup> Bakunin's letters certainly do not give the impression that the Russians founded the society, but they do testify to Bakunin's attempts to internationalise the Russian revolutionary movement at the same time as trying to become closer himself to Russian affairs. In a letter to Ralli dated May 1872, he encourages Ralli to enter the Polish society; within it he and his colleagues should pronounce their anarchist convictions openly and intelligently, and only leave the society if it assumed a programme with a fundamental contradiction with theirs. It could become the basis for a Slav section or Alliance. They should also, recommended Bakunin, try to weed out any Marxism in the society.<sup>28</sup> The same letter also asks for a full and frank account of relations with Ross, indicating that the state of affairs between him and Ralli's group was not improving.

In 1872 a Slav Section of the International was formed, with an anarchist programme. It joined the Jura Federation, and its secretary was Ralli. It had a strong Serbian contingent and was represented at the Jura Federation congresses, but apart from the transport of anarchist literature to Serbia there is little sign of any real activity.<sup>29</sup> Ralli recalls that there were few politically conscious members and complained to Bakunin of the Section's low political level. Bakunin replied that bad as it was it was better than nothing,

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<sup>25</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.91

<sup>26</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* note to p.91

<sup>27</sup> M.P. Sazhin "Russkie v Tsyurikhe" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.10 1932 p.31

<sup>28</sup> "Pis'mo k Z.K. Ralli 28 maya 1872" p.212

and was indispensable for their cause among the Slavs. Would it really be better, he asked, if the Serbs followed the statist Svetozar Markovic into the arms of the German Social Democrats? If the Serbs had not fully absorbed the anarchist programme, he wrote, the same could be said of some of the Russians.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile the Polish Society slipped from the grasp of the Bakunists; in any case Ralli had been disappointed with its low political level, and "unconscious" acceptance of their programme, evidenced by the ease with which it was replaced. Ralli relates that they left the Poles to themselves after that, and the Society soon ceased to exist. The weakness of these organisations was encouraging him to look back to Russia; the arrest of Nechaev in Zurich focused everyone's attention.

The arrest caused a great stir among the political émigrés in Switzerland since it obviously took place at the request of the Russian government. Everyone considered Nechaev a political exile, and although they opposed him, the Russian government's triumph and the very fact of a political extradition from Switzerland aroused great consternation. Ralli led the chorus of protest, issuing a proclamation with Bakunin and others. This appeal, written in German and signed by Ralli, Gol'shtein, El'snits, Bakunin and others, proclaimed that "Nechaev is not our friend, and we have nothing in common with his principles; but since he is pursued by the Russian government, he is sacred to us and we are duty bound to insist on his right as a refugee." It was obvious from the trial of his followers that the Russian government was seeking him on political grounds, and to hand him over would be to submit to the rule of the knout. They therefore appealed to all Swiss citizens not to let their republic take the hand of Russian despotism.<sup>31</sup>

The campaign continued with a pamphlet entitled *Netschajeff: est-il un criminel politique ou non?*,<sup>32</sup> which set out to prove the political nature of his crimes. It was well-known, wrote Ralli, that the Russian people were the most

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<sup>29</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.95

<sup>30</sup> "Pis'mo k Z.K. Ralli 17 dekabrya 1872" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.216

<sup>31</sup> "Appel Russischer Emigranten" in *Archives Bakounine IV* pp.161-162

<sup>32</sup> "Netschajeff- est-il un criminel politique ou non?" in *Archives Bakounine IV* p.166



oppressed in Europe, with all social movements stamped out, and the population enslaved and hungry. Nechaev's society, the pamphlet said, aimed to raise the people to rebellion. Nechaev was indeed a fanatic, formed by the miserable conditions of Russian life, but with remarkable energy and devotion to his cause. Suspicions had grown within the society that Ivanov, the student murdered by Nechaev's followers and whose death was being used by the Russian government to arrest Nechaev as a common criminal, had entered the society with the intention of denouncing them. The unfortunate logic of Nechaev's organisation meant that death was its only way of dealing with obstacles. Furthermore, the trial of the Nechaevtsy in Russia had been given the title of "Trial of the Conspiracy aimed at Overthrowing the Current Government of Russia", and those involved in the Ivanov murder had been grouped together with seven others on conspiracy, not murder, charges. This proved the Russian government's attitude to the affair.<sup>33</sup> Therefore Nechaev was a political refugee and should not be handed over by the Swiss government to Russia.

In spite of his former Jacobin leanings and association with Nechaev, it does not seem likely to me that Ralli had retained any close ties with Nechaev, or indeed his ideas. For one thing, his (Ralli's) alliance with Bakunin would have made it difficult or impossible to maintain relations with Nechaev even if he had wanted to, and for another, Nechaev by now was thoroughly discredited in the émigré community, at least as much as he was in Russia, since his attempts to manipulate the likes of Bakunin, Ogarev and Natalie Herzen had come to light. Finally, Ralli appears to have immersed himself fully in the anarchist cause, judging by his attempts to spread anarchism among Slavic émigrés in Switzerland. Like others in Russia who accepted the need for a radical solution to the subjugation of the Russian people, but were forced to reject the Jacobin solution in the light of the Nechaev affair, Ralli found answers in Bakuninist anarchism. Within Russia, however, as I have argued in the previous chapter, these answers were found almost independently of Bakunin until the arrival there of *Statism and Anarchy* (in

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<sup>33</sup> "Netschajeff- est-il un criminel..." p.165

which Ralli played a part). Ralli got them, so to speak, from the horse's mouth. I would suggest, therefore, that Ralli's concern for Nechaev sprang not from sympathy for him, but from his position as a recent political émigré himself. The arrest of Nechaev in a country thought to be a safe haven for political refugees from Russia must have sent shivers through the émigré community there.

In spite of a public campaign and the support of some of the mainstream Swiss press, Nechaev remained in captivity. Ralli formulated an escape plan, but was prevented from taking part in it by Bakunin, who objected to the expenditure of revolutionary forces on a "political dead-end". This, rather ironically, reflects a point in Nechaev's original Programme of Revolutionary Action, in which it is stated that "when a comrade falls into difficulty, the revolutionary, in deciding whether to rescue him, should base himself not in personal feelings but only in its usefulness to the cause."<sup>34</sup> In the event the rescue attempt was half-hearted and easily prevented.

Ralli now began to direct his activities more specifically to Russia. An attempt to set up a press in 1872 came to nothing; a letter from Bakunin to Ottiliya El'snits of November 1872 states that while Bakunin would not be materially involved in a press, from a political point of view he was in favour, and recommended that he speak to James Guillaume about Swiss laws which prevented women and unqualified printers from working in the printing industry.<sup>35</sup> This would seem to indicate that Ralli and his friends were contemplating setting up a press to produce material for the Russian movement on their own initiative, and not under Bakunin's direction. This may well have been in response to the fact that Peter Lavrov and his followers in Zurich were in discussion with the Chaikovtsy in Russia with the aim of producing a journal. As we noted in the last chapter, by Autumn 1872 the possibility had arisen of this journal being produced in collaboration with the Bakuninists, and this may explain why the prospect of a separate Bakuninist press came to nothing for the time being.<sup>36</sup> However the collaborative press

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<sup>34</sup> Bazilevskii *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya* p.184

<sup>35</sup> "Lettre à Ottilja El'snic 9 novembre 1872" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.214

<sup>36</sup> Philip Pomper *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* Chicago 1972 p.136

also came to nothing; a letter from Bakunin to Gol'shtein reveals that discussions were indeed going on, but Bakunin, having received and read what must have been Lavrov's second draft programme for *Vpered!* strongly advised his young friends against collaboration on the basis of such a programme, which in his view involved far too much involvement with officialdom, and put too much emphasis on scientific preparation. Are we setting up an émigré university? he asks. It is a good cause, but not ours; let Lavrov do it, I meanwhile will concern myself with revolution.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, discussion obviously continued between the two factions, because Lavrov sent Bakunin in April the following year another programme of *Vpered!* which, he wrote, he hoped Bakunin would like more than the last. This presumably was the final programme for the journal which began to be produced later in 1873.

However, Lavrov also refers to the conflict between his followers and the Bakuninists in Zurich, who had, he said, "dragged their banner through the mud, along with Bakunin's name."<sup>38</sup> This presumably refers to Ralli's group, amongst others. The Bakuninists and Lavrovists in Zurich were embroiled in bitter disputes which, apart from differences in principle, centred around a library which had been set up largely on the initiative of Bakuninist students, but which was becoming increasingly used by Lavrovists. In order to safeguard its Bakuninist character, Ross in particular tried to prevent Lavrovists using it for meetings and lectures. Foreseeing a conflict, some Lavrovists borrowed large numbers of books. A meeting to discuss the issue broke up with a majority leaving and setting up a new committee which proclaimed the library open to all Russians abroad. Ralli was among the three appointed by the old library to supervise it; however the breakaway majority, mostly Lavrovists, refused to return the books they had borrowed, and used them to set up a new library, along with money and documents from the old library.<sup>39</sup> So it would seem that much of the heat in the split between Bakuninists and Lavrovists in Zurich (which at one stage came to fighting in

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<sup>37</sup> "Pis'mo k Vladimiru Gol'shteinu 27 dekabrya 1872" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.217

<sup>38</sup> "Lettre de Petr Lavrov à Michel Bakounine avril 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.453

<sup>39</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.120-121

the street) resulted from personal acrimony and squabbling rather than political principle. Nevertheless this would not of course have helped the prospect of the two factions collaborating on a journal. Hence *Vpered!* when it appeared had an exclusively Lavrovist character, in its emphasis on personal and intellectual preparation for revolution; as we have seen, this misjudged the mood of revolutionaries in Russia, who found more affirmation in Bakunin's ideas than Lavrov's. The two men, it should be noted, were not involved in the library dispute; Lavrov criticised the "triviality and pitiable way of life in Zurich";<sup>40</sup> Bakunin wrote to Lavrov that the Russians in Zurich should try to work together, and perhaps set up some sort of court to sort out the "shameful affair".<sup>41</sup>

Withdrawal from the journal project left Ralli and his group lacking in contacts with Russia, but the arrival in Zurich of F. Lermontov, S. Kovalik and N. Debagorii-Mokrievich provided some. These three had come to Switzerland to take part in the politics of the Russian colony and the International, but found themselves returning to Russia to set up Bakuninist circles and distribute literature. Now the Bakuninist exiles could compete at least to some degree with Lavrov, whose works were already well-known in Russia. A press was obviously necessary however, if Bakuninist literature was to be produced in order to be smuggled into Russia. This was finally set up on Ralli's initiative; he gave all his money over to it and worked in the setting office.

However, the difficult relations between Ralli and Ross, which had rumbled on ever since Ralli's association with Bakunin, soon came to a head. Bakunin tried to smooth things over; in a letter he chided Ralli for being too doctrinaire in his principles, which would make relations with others, like Ross, problematic. Ross, he wrote, valued and esteemed Ralli, and admitted that while the former's cold dry nature could not attract Gol'shtein, his practicality was necessary.<sup>42</sup> Bakunin's attempts merely papered over the cracks; during the summer, as the new press was printing *The Historical*

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<sup>40</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.122

<sup>41</sup> "Pis'mo k Petru Lavrovu 15 aprelya 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.220

<sup>42</sup> "Pis'mo k Zamfiriyu Ralli 17 marta 1873" *Archives Bakounine V* p.218

*Development of the International* (James Guillaume) and *Statism and Anarchy* (Bakunin) work came to a halt. According to Ralli, Ross shut the office down and took the key. According to Ross however, Ralli and co. could not cope with the eleven-hour days required to get the book completed.<sup>43</sup> Ralli proposed moving the office to Geneva. Gol'shtein disagreed, worried that *Statism and Anarchy* would not be finished.<sup>44</sup> In the end the collaboration broke down, Ross kept the press and the books were eventually finished and distributed in Russia by M. Lermontov's group. Ralli and the others decided to form a new group and contacted Bakunin to inform him. He took this as an invitation to choose between Ross and Ralli, and while he hoped that personal relations would continue, he had to hold to Ross.<sup>45</sup> The split was complete.

### **3: The Revolutionary *Obshchina* of Russian Anarchists**

Ralli's new organisation was the Revolutionary Commune (*obshchina*) of Russian Anarchists. They adhered to the same principles as before but hoped to practice them better free of the overbearing personality of Bakunin and the superior attitude of Ross. At first the split seemed to go fairly amicably, at least between Ralli, El'snits and Gol'shtein and Bakunin.<sup>46</sup> By Autumn however things were less than friendly.<sup>47</sup> Ralli contacted the Chaikovtsy's printer L. Gol'denberg to try to set up a new press. Gol'denberg and Ralli printed a declaration, *K russkim revolyutsioneram*, which Bakunin considered to be the dangerous publication of the secret principles of the Brotherhood, although no reference was made to this organisation.<sup>48</sup> However, the offence caused complicated the liquidation of relations with Bakunin. Negotiations lasted until July 1874, immediately preceding Bakunin's "retirement" and probably influencing it.<sup>49</sup>

#### **3-1: Propaganda**

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<sup>43</sup> Sazhin "Russkie v Tsyurikhe" p.66

<sup>44</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.151

<sup>45</sup> "Lettre à Alexandr El'snic 16 août 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.223

<sup>46</sup> "Lettre d'Alexandr El'snic à Zamfirij Ralli 28 VIII 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.454

<sup>47</sup> "Lettre de Vladimir Gol'shtein à Zamfirij Ralli 1 octobre 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.456

<sup>48</sup> "Lettre à Zamfirij Ralli 18 octobre 1873" in *Archives Bakounine V* p.225

<sup>49</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.154

Much of what the Commune published is now difficult or impossible to obtain, and little has been reprinted. What is available to us however can be of interest as attempts to build theoretical, tactical, organisational and personal links between the anarchist movement in Europe, particularly the federalist International, and the revolutionary movement in Russia, as well as providing an insight into how the émigrés perceived that movement.<sup>50</sup>

The declaration which Ralli's group issued was, as the title suggests, an attempt to link their anarchism to the movement in Russia. It stressed that the revolutionaries must remain always among the *narod*, giving up the *barskaya sreda*, however liberal it may be. Whoever wants to serve the cause of popular revolution must become a unit of the *narod*.<sup>51</sup> The aim was the destruction of all religious, political, juridical, economic and social institutions of the bourgeois order, and the creation of a free and independent organisation of the liberated masses in its place. As to means, the group opposed all forms of revolutionary dictatorships and provisional governments and called for the "organised outburst of revolutionary passions."<sup>52</sup> Hence the first tasks of the revolution must be the destruction of all evidence of rents, property, money, passports and official papers, to destroy all kinds of political, juridical and legal right and replace them with revolutionary fact. Thus the programme outlined a form of insurrectionism which was common in the European anarchist movement at the time, and which Malatesta and others attempted to put into practice in Italy in the abortive risings of Bologna and Benevento in 1874 and 1877 respectively. It also outlined a scheme for an international federalist revolutionary organisation, with local revolutionary communes associating via delegates to connect all points in revolutionary countries for common defence and the administration of provisions, and the seizure and distribution of capital and the instruments of production.<sup>53</sup> To this

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<sup>50</sup> The declaration *K russkim revolyutsioneram*, a pamphlet, *Parizhskaya kommuna*, and the newspaper *Rabotnik*, are kept in the IISH in Amsterdam; the book *Sytie i golodnye*, the newspaper *Obshchina*, a commentary to Ct. Pahlen's report on the revolutionary movement and a pamphlet, *Bashi-buzuki Peterburga*, are in the Houghton Library microfilmed collection, numbers 579, 1006, 479 and 577 respectively.

<sup>51</sup> *K russkim revolyutsioneram* Geneva 1873 p.4

<sup>52</sup> *K russkim revolyutsioneram* p.5

<sup>53</sup> *K russkim revolyutsioneram* p.7

end it was necessary that a force exist within the population itself to influence the popular movement and prevent the formation of governments or political authority which could be the basis for a new state. Ralli called on Russian revolutionaries to give the popular movement there a world character without which local revolution would die.<sup>54</sup> This attempt to give international significance to the movement in Russia and to link it with the activities of the federalist International was to become one of the hallmarks of the group's propaganda.

The programme strongly opposed any collaboration with bourgeois parties and vainglorious "false revolutionaries"; the time of outstanding personalities, natural in political revolutions, was past. The social revolution would be generated from within the masses; the intelligentsia could only give them a thought-out, scientific version of what the *narod* already feels and wants.<sup>55</sup> This connected both the ideas of the anarchists on the relation of the revolutionary intellectuals and organisers to the masses, and the emerging populist concern in Russia to "go to the people"; revolution must arise from within the people itself, and the organisation of the revolution must also be within the people. This represented a difference with the Jacobin trend in populism, as expressed by Nechaev and Tkachev, which advocated the seizure of political power and revolution from above, but also with the likes of Lavrovists in the Russian movement and more Marxist tendencies in Europe, for whom education and the raising of workers' consciousness was important; for these groups, socialism was to be brought to the masses from outside by the intellectuals; for Ralli and co., following the anarchists, socialism was developed within the people, and required only organisational and tactical help from intellectuals. Thus it was vital for the intellectuals to operate within the *narod*, in essence, to become workers. Populists in Russia were reaching similar conclusions.

The Revolutionary Commune did not share the passions of the extreme Bakuninists like Debagorii-Mokrievich who denied the usefulness of

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<sup>54</sup> *K russkim revolyutsioneram* p.10

<sup>55</sup> *K russkim revolyutsioneram* p.13

propaganda and literacy.<sup>56</sup> They hoped to broaden the horizons of the worker, an ideal which they held in common with the Chaikovtsy. In fact the group continued to work with the Chaikovtsy and their printing presses eventually merged.<sup>57</sup> According to Bogucharskii the publications of the Revolutionary Commune were included in the Chaikovtsy's literary arsenal.<sup>58</sup> The work of the group consisted of producing revolutionary literature for Russia. They were according to L. Deich the strongest voice in the emigration of the 1870s, with the best connections with Russia.<sup>59</sup>

The Revolutionary Commune's first publication after their declaration of principles addressed to the Russian revolutionaries was a pamphlet on the Paris Commune, written by Ralli. Again, although written for a Russian audience, the subject matter is obviously intended to acquaint Russians with the revolutionary movement in the West, and with the anarchist interpretation of it. In the introduction, Ralli tries to show how the bourgeoisie in France had consistently deceived the workers and stolen the revolution from them. In so doing he is critical of Babeuf and the conspiracy of equals, whose ideas had so influenced him during his early revolutionary career. For them, revolution meant a popular rising, in the midst of which people of initiative seize power, not understanding that for the people this meant simply a change of masters.<sup>60</sup> The same thing had happened in 1848. In Paris in 1871 this had not been possible; the bourgeoisie had been forced to flee the city.

Ralli describes the free, autonomous commune, which the workers of Paris hoped to institute, as the denial of the idea of the state. The basic social unit which demands autonomy is the worker. Producers have the right to make their own agreements on how they work and live, and thus to create truly autonomous organs of production. In the same way, by mutual agreement, workers of the same commune create an organ of consumption. The federation of these organs by mutual agreement is the ultimate goal of popular revolution. The mistake the Commune Committee in Paris had made

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<sup>56</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.141

<sup>57</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.141

<sup>58</sup> V. Bogucharskii *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov* Moscow 1912 p.168

<sup>59</sup> L.Deich *Russkaya revolyutsionnaya emigratsiya 70kh godov* St. Petersburg 1920 p.4



was to try to placate the petty bourgeoisie and small traders, who wanted peace; they hesitated, and called for the help of bourgeois republicans, when they should have called on the rest of revolutionary France, and led the National Guard to Versailles. The revolution had to be taken outside of Paris if it were to succeed in destroying statist, political, juridical and legal France.<sup>61</sup> This in essence is what Bakunin and the anarchists had been trying to achieve in sparking the abortive rising in Lyon at the time. This pointed, according to Ralli, to the necessity of organising a revolutionary force within the *narod*, which would have enabled the Paris revolution to spread. But the Committee of the Commune had doubted the strength of the *narod* and instead called on republicans, despite some of them having sided with the authorities in Versailles, and thus the revolution was taken outside of the *narod*. The same story will be repeated until the revolution gives up for ever the state idea; even if pure revolutionaries replace the enemies of the people in power, they will become enemies of the independent organisation of popular groups, making laws and rules and taking power outside of popular groups to make their own decisions.<sup>62</sup>

Subsequent chapters of the pamphlet deal in some detail with the elections to the Commune Council. Ralli states, however, that the danger to the revolution was represented not by the minority of bourgeois elected to the council, but by the lack of understanding of the principle of free organisation or the ideals of the proletariat amongst a majority of the Council. They naively believed in the power of decrees to destroy exploitation.<sup>63</sup> Instead of an executive of popular will, the Commune became a government; this was the beginning of the end of the revolution. Its decrees promised to sort out the problems of Paris, and asked for the trust of the people; this reflected the influence of the state tradition, which the popular revolution needs to destroy. This essentially was the lesson which the anarchists drew from the experience of the Paris Commune, basically a reaffirmation of their belief that

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<sup>60</sup> Z.K. Ralli *Parizhskaya kommuna* Geneva 1874 p.9

<sup>61</sup> Ralli *Parizhskaya kommuna* p.49

<sup>62</sup> Ralli *Parizhskaya kommuna* p.54

<sup>63</sup> Ralli *Parizhskaya kommuna* p.63

when the people allows limits to be put on the revolution, and allows power to be taken out of their organisations and placed in an executive authority, the revolution is over.

As news of the mass arrests in Russia in 1874 started to arrive in Switzerland, along with some of the refugees, Ralli's attention turned to more specifically Russian affairs. By 1875, links with Russia were being pursued more actively, through the remaining Chaikovtsy and through a new organisation started by a group of Caucasian students and a circle of Russian women students, which we shall discuss below and in the next chapter. In 1875, a secret memo from the chief of the gendarmes in Russia, Count Palen, somehow fell into the hands of Ralli's group, who published it in full, with notes by Ralli. This memo was entitled *The Successes of Revolutionary Propaganda in Russia*, and in it Palen summarised the activities of the revolutionaries in Russia and the alarm of the government. According to Palen, the whole thing had begun innocently enough in the education circles of the 1860s, as theoretical, literary, youthful enthusiasms - a fact which, as Ralli pointed out in an appended note, had not prevented the government from harshly persecuting them.<sup>64</sup> However, literature from home and abroad disguised revolutionary ideas with phrases about the position of the lower classes, which had influenced young people who were unfamiliar with the realities of state and economic life, and led them to call for the destruction of states and bourgeois civilisation. The influence of Bakunin and of *Vpered!* were noted. The youth were drawn into the revolutionary movement, it was claimed, not just by propaganda but also by the numerous women and girls involved.<sup>65</sup> This compounded the insult delivered by the Russian government in 1873 when it disbanded the student colony in Zurich; that decree had also questioned the morals of the women students, when what we know of both the students and the revolutionaries of the time suggests that they were in fact more inclined to asceticism than to licence. Palen also questioned the morality of the female propagandists operating inside Russia, expressing

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<sup>64</sup> *Ekspeditsiya shefa zhandarmov* Geneva 1875 p.6

<sup>65</sup> *Ekspeditsiya shefa zhandarmov* p.10

horror at the idea of "young women of good family working in fields and sleeping together with their male workmates". It would seem that the tsarist government was attempting to use the high incidence of women involved in the populist movement to accuse it of immorality.

In describing at length supposedly ubiquitous agitators, safehouses, codes, money, secret presses and revolutionaries armed with revolvers, ready for robberies, forgery and prison breakouts, the government showed itself to have been alarmed by the extent of the movement of 1874; probably unnecessarily, since the arrests of 1873 and early 1874 had disrupted much of the organisation of the movement to the people before it had started. Palen described a network of small centres working to a preconceived plan produced by Kropotkin, and the early success of the movement could be attributed to the lack of resistance and even active support of society as a whole. Of course it could be said that as the head of a government department, Palen was bound to talk up the extent of the threat posed by the revolutionaries in order to attract resources into his department; at the same time, however, he would not want his gendarmes to appear to have been incompetent. Furthermore, the memo does seem to express some genuine alarm, and as such it made an ideal morale booster for what was left of the movement after the arrests.

Ralli's commentary to the memo puts an anarchist interpretation of the events of 1874; the lessons learned from the Nechaev affair, and the inspiration of the Paris Commune and the International had begun a new era in the Russian revolutionary movement; centralism, dictatorship and conspiracy had been left behind in favour of federalism and propaganda and agitation among the *narod*. It would seem that the federal rather than conspiratorial nature of groups like the Chaikovtsy in Russia, and their emphasis on working among the *narod* rather than the intelligentsia, allowed Ralli to claim the movement to the people for anarchism. Given that it had resulted largely in arrests, and not in revolution, it might be thought that this would be a political disadvantage; nevertheless as subsequent chapters will show, for the next few years it was the anarchist tendency in the populist

movement which remained at the forefront, while Lavrovism declined. Lavrov had misjudged the mood of the youth in Russia with his gradualist programme; although the results of the movement to the people had been disappointing for the revolutionaries in Russia, from the point of view of the émigrés competing for influence on the movement, it would have appeared that the movement had opted for a more anarchist approach. Thus in the first instance it was the anarchists who took the initiative in trying to rebuild the movement.

However, Ralli also took time to criticise Palen's "heroic" world-view, with powerful personalities and blind masses. Lavrov, he wrote, did not create the youth of Moscow and Petersburg, rather it was they who had created him, dragging him from metaphysics into the world of practical action. Similarly Bakunin, although a great agitator, was not a dictator over the Russian youth, as Palen imagined; the initiative belonged to the Russian youth itself who had created the countless circles, worked out for themselves the anarchist spirit which inspired them and the federal organisation which was the source of their strength and success. The time of great personalities was over and now that the revolution was conscious, i.e. anarchist, it would be based on collectivity.<sup>66</sup>

In a sense these publications by the Young Bakuninists were polemical, in that they aimed to show that popular revolutionary movements were independently taking on the forms and tactics that anarchists had been advocating. As such they were aimed at the revolutionary intelligentsia. However, with formal contacts being established with the group of Georgian students and the so-called Fritschi group of Russian women students, who were planning to return to Russia to try to rebuild the movement there,<sup>67</sup> their attention turned to producing propaganda materials aimed at a popular audience.

In 1875 they published Ralli's book *Sytye i golodnye* in which he gave an account of the workers' position and concluded that across the world they

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<sup>66</sup> *Ekspeditsiya shefa zhandarmov* p.24

<sup>67</sup> This group, which became known as the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

have the same enemies: the landlord and the government. In his description of affairs in Russia, Ralli followed the general populist line, and also attacked Nechaev. He discussed the International, from a Bakuninist angle of course, and in a deliberately popular style.<sup>68</sup> The book was not widely distributed in Russia, but its importance lies in its attempt to apply anarchism to the situation of the workers and peasants in Russia. It is clear from the style and content of the book that it was intended for a popular audience, workers and peasants rather than intelligentsia. In its 500 or so pages, Ralli attempts a potted history of Russia and Europe to demonstrate how injustice and inequality have plagued mankind throughout history, and the futility of awaiting salvation from political leaders, be they kings or representatives. All that has changed in recent times is the justification for the oppression of workers; the divine right of kings has been replaced in Europe by the superior knowledge and education of those who rule.<sup>69</sup> All workers in all lands have the same enemies - the boss and the government - and the same needs - to free themselves and obtain equality and justice.<sup>70</sup> The Internationalist aspect of the revolutionary movement is important; we know that this must have corresponded in some degree to the ideas of the Pan-Russian group since the Georgian contingent had joined the Fritschis women after rejecting the national liberation ideas of their Georgian revolutionary colleagues, which they felt could divert a great movement down petty diversionary paths.<sup>71</sup>

The first chapter of *Sytye i golodnye* deals with ancient societies and the seeds of minority rule and the class system. Wherever leaders are chosen in ancient societies, their privileges increase and they begin to live better than the rest. Gradually a system develops to reinforce this privilege; this is the root of the State. Rome is taken as an example of ancient states with the patrician minority living well while plebeians and slaves suffered. Christianity, a philosophy which was dangerous for the rich, was attacked, and when this

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<sup>68</sup> F. Venturi *Roots* p.529. *Sytye i golodnye* is now a rarity but is available in the British Library, the IISH and the Houghton microfilmed collection no.579.

<sup>69</sup> Z.K. Ralli *Sytye i golodnye* Geneva 1875 p.8

<sup>70</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.14

<sup>71</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.525

failed, was taken over by the ruling class by deception.<sup>72</sup> This provides the basis for the book's attack on religion; Ralli is careful to avoid criticising religion *per se*, focusing his attack on the priests, the robbery which takes place in the name of the church, and its encouragement of deference and the "divinely ordained" position of people in society.<sup>73</sup> This perhaps reflects a lesson learned from the propagandists in the Russian countryside; the peasants' religion was something which had to be dealt with carefully.

In Chapter 2 the fall of Rome presages a new form of slavery, the feudal order. Ralli describes in fairly simple terms the pyramid of land ownership from the king down to local leaders, leaving the mass of people obliged to work the land and hand over some of their produce. This would obviously chime with the experience of the Russian peasants under serfdom. The initial democracy and independence of the free cities in Europe is described and praised, and followed by an explanation of how a class system grew up there also, so that a peasant fleeing slavery in the countryside found only new bosses in town, the richest of whom were to become industrialists with big factories and hired labour.<sup>74</sup>

The central, anarchist, message of the book begins with the section on peasant revolts in Europe. The English peasants had risen in the mistaken belief that the king would help them. The Germans trusted Martin Luther and found that new religious tyranny replaced the old. The French gave their hard won victory away to representatives. The mistake that working people made was to ally themselves with members of higher classes. Popular revolts can only succeed if the people take charge of their own affairs. No new government will help the people because once they have power, their object becomes the retention of power. Not until 1848 did European workers realise this and recognise their enemy, the bourgeoisie.

Having set the international context, in the next two chapters Ralli deals with Russia. The Russian Empire was created by violence and deceit. From the popular government of Kiev Rus', and the independence of cities

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<sup>72</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.51

<sup>73</sup> Ralli *Sytye* see eg. pp. 113, 173

<sup>74</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.102

like Novgorod, the rich took over the institution of popular control over the princes, the *Veche*; the princes became permanent, and the boyars grew strong. The Mongols reinforced this; the princes were allowed to rule as long as they paid tribute. Thus the basis of Tsarism is not God's will but the Tatars.<sup>75</sup> The peasants meanwhile found their land taken from them, and became serfs.

Throughout this section Ralli seeks to demolish the myth of the good Tsar by showing how he and the boyars enslaved the people of Russia. The myth of the saviour-Tsar was one of the most difficult problems facing the revolutionaries, and Ralli attempts to deal with it by showing that the Tsar supports and is supported by the boyars/landowners against the peasants. Noting the closely-linked problem of the peasants awaiting a saviour instead of saving themselves, he points out the deleterious consequences of following new Tsars in the Time of Troubles, or warrior-leaders like Pugachev. The reason his rebellion failed was that the peasants waited for him to come and save them, instead of rising for themselves. And although he loved the people, if he had won he would have installed himself on Catherine's throne and nothing would have changed.<sup>76</sup> This pattern is constantly repeated; a dissatisfied people puts faith in a new leader, and is let down. Therefore the people must trust their own strength; if the people rise together no army can stop them.

The current position in Russia is bleak, according to Ralli. The freedom of 1861 meant little. The peasants have to pay for their land, they are heavily taxed, still effectively enslaved to the *pomeshchik*. The Tsar himself said there was no more freedom to be got. Millions of rubles were produced by industry, but the workers were still poor, despite their endless toil. This is almost the first reference to factory workers in the book, which concentrates on the peasants. Everywhere the working population goes hungry, while grain is exported, while the Tsar spends vast amounts on his daughter's wedding.<sup>77</sup> There is hope however; the last part of Chapter 4 is devoted to the history of

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<sup>75</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.174

<sup>76</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.290

<sup>77</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.387

the revolutionary movement. The revolutionaries of the early 1860s, with their calls for a *Zemskii sobor* were genuine friends of the people but misguided in their belief in elected representatives. *Zemlya i volya* tried to bring educated youth over to the side of the people but they did not know the people and did not think they could succeed without the help of the educated. Ralli mentions Herzen, Chernyshevskii and Dobrolyubov who taught Russians to work for freedom. Karakozov is praised; without such men Russia's history would be dark indeed. (Ralli reflects none of the problems anarchists were to have in evaluating the assassination attempts on Russian and European leaders.) Nechaev knew little of history: his desire to seize power would not help the people. He did not trust the people nor believe in the free union of communes. But now, learning from their mistakes, the revolutionaries have got it right, going to the people in factories, towns and villages and working with them for freedom. The storm now brewing in the West may be distant in Russia,<sup>78</sup> but the work had begun to unite the peasants against all their oppressors. (As we saw in his commentary to Count Palen's memo, Ralli interpreted the movement "to the people" as anarchist-inspired.)

The final chapter of *Sytye i golodnye* is on the International, and Ralli attempts to link the populist movement in Russia with the federalists of the International. The basis of both is that the workers have to free themselves. He discusses the congresses and statutes of the International, and the split between centralists and federalists: the powerful General Council was a repeat of the error of delegating the revolution to leaders. The Paris Commune failed because the workers were not prepared; unlike some of the *buntari* in Russia, Ralli tempered the call for immediate risings with the need for propaganda and organisation. Both the International and the history of Russia and Europe show that while there have been mistakes and disagreements, much has been achieved. Everywhere the working people are oppressed, but they have started to recognise their enemies. The Russian workers must not trust those who promise to help them if they have power, nor should they choose people from their midst and give them power. The

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<sup>78</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.299



only friends of the workers are those who have given up all privilege, and joined the "hungry", helping them to recognise their position and how to free themselves.<sup>79</sup> This echoes Bakunin's call to revolutionaries to submerge themselves in the life of the people, and of course the *khozhdenie v narod*. However, Ralli seems to be referring to the idea of "fixed" propaganda, learning a trade and living in a village to propagandise, rather than paying "flying" visits.

### 3-2: *Rabotnik*

In 1875 the group began to produce the first Russian-language paper specifically for workers, the *Rabotnik*.<sup>80</sup> This was distributed by various groups in Russia, including D'yakov's in St. Petersburg, but the main centre for distribution was the Pan-Russian Social Revolutionary Organisation in Moscow, with whom Ralli's group had close connections.<sup>81</sup> It also cropped up in later trials, such as that of Koval'skii in 1878 and Antonov in 1879 when copies were found in searches.<sup>82</sup> *Rabotnik* aimed to acquaint Russian workers with the movement abroad, with their own position and ways to change it. It proposed solidarity of workers and peasants and seizure of land and factories.<sup>83</sup> *Rabotnik* lasted for a year, as did the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, whose members were tried at the "Trial of the 50".

Following the wave of arrests of propagandists in Russia in 1873/4, which destroyed much of the activities of the Chaikovskii circle, Sergei Kravchinskii and Nikolai Morozov were among the few Chaikovtsy left at large in Moscow. Their colleagues summoned them to St. Petersburg, where Morozov was told that he was to be sent abroad to work on a newspaper for the workers of Russia.<sup>84</sup> Until such time as the destroyed organisations in Russia could be rebuilt, the best chance of accomplishing anything seemed to

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<sup>79</sup> Ralli *Sytye* p.525

<sup>80</sup> This has apparently been reprinted (Moscow 1933) but I have been unable to locate it. The original is housed in the IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>81</sup> Deich *Emigratsiya* p.5

<sup>82</sup> "Pervaya russkaya sotsialisticheskaya rabochaya gazeta" in *Byloe* Jan. 1904 pp.4-5

<sup>83</sup> *Rabotnik* no1, quoted in Bogucharskii *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo* p.227

<sup>84</sup> N. Morozov *Povesti moei zhizni* v.I, Moscow 1961 p.301

be to work with the émigrés in Switzerland.<sup>85</sup> Having crossed the border dressed as a Jewess, Morozov reached Switzerland and was informed of the split in the Bakuninist camp. He was introduced to Ralli and El'snits, his editing companions, and work began on putting together the first issue of *Rabotnik*.

Since, according to Morozov, the *Rabotnik* venture was already planned and he was sent to take part in it by the remaining Chaikovtsy, rather than simply arriving in Switzerland and joining Ralli's group, we must assume that it was a joint venture between the movement in Russia and the émigrés. Also involved were the group of Georgians around I. Dzhabadari and N. Chekoidze, and the Fritschi group of women students, who in the wake of the Russian government's decree breaking up the Zürich colony, had adopted an anarchist programme based on that of the Jura Federation of the International.<sup>86</sup> Hearing from Dzhabadari about the wave of arrests the Fritschi and the Georgians united to form a new group to fill the empty places in Russia, and contacted Ralli for printing services, as well as the remaining Chaikovtsy in Russia. Thus it was that a new propagandist group was formed under the influences both of the movement "to the people" of 1873-4 (Chekoidze and Dzhabadari for example learned the blacksmith's trade to assist their propaganda<sup>87</sup>) and the anarchism of the federalist International. Basing itself in Moscow this group picked up the factory-based propaganda initiated by the Chaikovtsy, availing itself of a large and varied amount of material including *Kolokol*, *Vpered!*, Bakunin's works and the publications of Ralli's group. They had decided to distribute all the works already published by the Revolutionary Commune, as well as the *Rabotnik*, which would be "their" publication.<sup>88</sup> The new group was the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation.

The first issue of *Rabotnik* appeared in January 1875. Venturi writes that it is not clear exactly how far the paper corresponded to the actual

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<sup>85</sup> Morozov *Povesti* p.305

<sup>86</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.164

<sup>87</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.164

<sup>88</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.529

experiences being undergone in Moscow;<sup>89</sup> however in contrast to the confusion surrounding the Chaikovtsy's links with *Vpered!*, *Rabotnik* was set up with the co-operation of those who were to form the propaganda group, so it is fair to assume that it corresponded at least to a basic *Weltanschauung*. Its leading article explained that it was produced for workers and peasants, who needed the means to think about how and why the people's wealth has been taken away from them, and how to resolve the situation. There were only two estates in Russia, the landowners, merchants and *chinovniki* who live on the work of others, and the peasants and workers. Wealth and power was in the hands of the former, with the tsar at their head. However, where there are parliaments, it is still the same old mess; parliaments still work to better the position of the sated and worsen that of the hungry. Apart from making workers and peasants aware of their position, *Rabotnik* also aimed to make them aware of the life of workers abroad, in order to unite them across Russia and with their brothers in Europe.<sup>90</sup>

This internationalism was a distinguishing feature of *Rabotnik*. For example, a series of articles on the International, written by Nikolai Zhukovskii, aimed to explain to Russian workers that the problems faced by workers in other countries were essentially the same as theirs, and that Russians should learn from their experiences. All workers have the same enemies, the "gospoda" and the government, and the same need, to create equality and justice. Russian workers needed to know how those in other lands conducted their struggle, how they make agreements among themselves which cross national borders, how they want to build their lives, and how, having learned from experience not to trust the representatives of the *sytye* they had united into a union to win their freedom.<sup>91</sup> In a later issue, an article entitled *Zemlya i volya* compared the struggle of workers in Russia with that of French workers. After the Revolution had failed to change things for France's workers, an emperor had appeared, and war began. The Russian muzhik had defeated this emperor in 1812, and hoped for land in return, but

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<sup>89</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.530

<sup>90</sup> *Rabotnik* No.1 1875 p.1

<sup>91</sup> "Mezhdunarodnoe tovarishchestvo rabochikh" in *Rabotnik* no.6 1875 p.4

this was not granted. The French workers, who were now enslaved by the merchants, kulaks and factory owners, made a *bunt* to free themselves in 1848, knowing they could only be free when they own the land and factories and have no bosses, but again it failed, again an emperor appeared and again war began, this time in Crimea. Once more, the Russian peasant was forced to fight; this time *volya* was granted, but the peasants had to pay the *pomeshchik* for the land stolen from them! Now in Europe the workers were uniting into societies and the International, in order to win back the land and the factories; if the Russian peasants also act together, no *pomeshchik* can beat them and the land will be theirs.<sup>92</sup>

Using examples from Europe, *Rabotnik* explained why the *narod* of Russia could not trust *blagodeteli*, who promised to improve things for them. Some of them wanted a constitution, which would restrict the power of the tsar with a duma; but the delegates would all be from the "sated" class, and the workers' lives would still be in the hands of owners of land and factories. If they sent a worker delegate to the duma, he would either be unable to operate among the "sated", or he would become one himself, as the European experience had already shown. Some *blagodeteli* go further, and call for a republic; but in a republic the *pomeshchiki*, kulaks and merchants rule without a tsar, and the working *narod* is still robbed. The army, police and courts remain in the hands of the "sated".<sup>93</sup> Finally, others want a *bunt* to get rid of the tsar, so they can seize power and give land and the tools of labour over to the *narod*. But again, this had already been tried, and it did not benefit the *narod* at all. This type of *blagodeteli* were enemies of free unions of artels and communes, didn't trust the *narod*, and wanted to command them. A *bunt* can only bring freedom when the *narod* itself gives it meaning.<sup>94</sup>

One of the central tasks which *Rabotnik* set itself was the erosion of the popular faith in the *tsar'-batyushka*, who would grant them freedom and land as soon as he could defeat the boyar opposition. Whether this was based on the experiences of some of the propagandists of 1873-4 who had

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<sup>92</sup> "Zemlya i volya" in *Rabotnik* no.10 1875 pp.1-2

<sup>93</sup> "Blagodeteli" in *Rabotnik* no.4 p.2

<sup>94</sup> "Blagodeteli" p.3

noted the phenomenon as a particular barrier to popular revolutionism, or whether it was simply assumed by the editors that it was something that would have to be dealt with, is uncertain. However, that other great impediment to revolutionary feeling, popular religion, was not addressed by the paper, although it does occasionally include priests among the lists of oppressors and exploiters. The paper tried to explain that the tsar was not on the side of the peasants; the reason they had not received land in 1861 was not boyar opposition, but because the tsar wanted to keep his lackeys happy.<sup>95</sup> The tsar was in fact the chief *pomeshchik*; there could never be a people's tsar, because the tsar needed war and soldiers, while the people wanted good workers and peaceful labour; the tsar needed gold and finery while the people needed to satisfy its needs and free itself from slavery. The people had to trust in itself, not await the blessing of the tsar.<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere they tried to show the opposition between the tsar and *narod* with such examples as a *bunt* which had arisen near Minsk, over land which had been taken from peasants and given to a noble by order of the tsar himself;<sup>97</sup> or that the tsar upheld the payment of exorbitant redemption fees in the Chigirin area, ordered moneys collected and ordered the troops to be sent in.<sup>98</sup> It is time, the paper proclaimed, for the *narod* to realise that the tsar was the greatest *pomeshchik*, and that they must trust in themselves. If they all rose together in a *bunt*, there were not enough soldiers to stop them.

This brings us on to two important areas in relating populism and anarchism, those of constituency and tactics. Franco Venturi has written that *Rabotnik* "dealt not with villages but with industrial centres."<sup>99</sup> Although it is true that the paper dealt with industrial centres, as we have already seen village and peasant issues also featured strongly. The implication of Prof. Venturi's argument is that after the débâcle of 1874, attention was turning to the towns and the urban workers as a more hopeful focus for propaganda; he

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<sup>95</sup> "Na sebya nadeisya!" in *Rabotnik* no.4 p.1

<sup>96</sup> "Na sebya nadeisya!" p.1

<sup>97</sup> "Druz'ya i vragi naroda" in *Rabotnik* no.8 p.2

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Ivan Nikiforov, apparently a Kiev factory worker, although its literacy indicates that it may have been written by an *intelligent*; *Rabotnik* no.8 p.6

<sup>99</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.530

backs this up by quoting the paper's criticism of the myth of Pugachev in No.5. However, closer inspection reveals that this article criticises the *Pugachevshchina* not because peasant *bunt* were no longer considered viable revolutionary tactics, but because the peasants had waited for leadership to come from outside, for Pugachev to save them; what was necessary now was for the peasants to organise themselves together for a general *bunt*.<sup>100</sup>

It appears to me from studying *Rabotnik* that the constituency the editors aimed at was that of the anarchists, i.e. the poorer workers *and* the peasants. For example, the letter cited above from Kiev follows immediately on from a lengthy letter purporting to be from a Serpukhov *fabrika* worker, and discusses a successful strike there. However, the letter links urban and rural problems in its discussion of ill-treatment of workers; women are not allowed to leave for their villages if they fall pregnant, but if they stay and give birth in the factory, they are fined.<sup>101</sup> The letter unites town and country workers in their suffering and in the list of their enemies. Furthermore, the letter on the Chigirin dispute over land and redemption fees was (supposedly) also written by a *fabrika* worker, and states at the beginning "Although we are urban mill-workers, factory workers, we and the village folk have the same needs, the same cause...we need to conspire together and fight together."<sup>102</sup>

So it would seem that *Rabotnik* was aimed at peasants and recently urbanised *fabrichnye* workers (although *zavodskie* workers are also mentioned) who still felt close to village affairs as well as having their own, specific mill/factory based problems to deal with. This reflects both the anarchists' desire to address the broad base of the very poorest, be they peasant or proletarian, and the populists' earlier attempts to link peasants and workers through the popular propagandist who had an interest in urban and rural affairs. Given that the *Rabotnik* group and their associates in Russia

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<sup>100</sup> "Russkoe gosudarstvo" in *Rabotnik* no.5 p.2

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Petr Mikolov of Serpukhov *Rabotnik* no.8 p.4. Incidentally this is the only reference I have found in the paper to specifically women's issues; once again it would appear that the emancipation of women was seen as part and parcel of the social revolution. The question of how the revolutionaries addressed working-class and peasant women will be dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from Ivan Nikiforov *Rabotnik* no.8 p.5

were aware of all that had happened in 1874, and were the only group making a serious attempt to revive a nation-wide revolutionary movement in Russia at this time (1875) it would appear that the lessons being drawn from 1874 were not that the entire nature of the movement had been wrong, and that the peasants were not after all potential revolutionary material; rather, as we shall discuss in the next chapter, that better organisation and conspiratorial technique was in order. As we shall see in later chapters, it was not until around 1877 that a sea-change began to affect the movement in Russia and many began to focus on the cities. This change was linked with a campaign for political revolution in Russia, as opposed to immediate socio-economic revolution.

As far as the tactics of revolution were concerned, in this regard *Rabotnik* remained staunchly Bakuninist. It is appropriate however to reiterate the divergence between the term Bakuninist as used in Europe and Russia; as we have seen in the previous chapter, in the Russian populist movement, the term Bakuninist could be rather indiscriminately applied to groups who simply favoured immediate and violent action in the countryside (so-called *vspyshkopuskateli*), as much as to those who had a good knowledge and understanding of Bakunin's ideas on revolution and tried to implement them in the Russian context. Furthermore, in the context of the European socialist movement, they distinguished themselves from both Marxian and Lasallean socialists and from syndicalists within anarchism in their preference for insurrectionism.<sup>103</sup> Applied to the Russian context of course the word *bunt* was used; however the editors of *Rabotnik* tried to infuse a new meaning into the word by encouraging the peasants and workers to organise in advance. It was necessary to start an agreement (*sgovor*) to pit the whole working world against the tsar and the well-fed. Intelligent *fabrichnye* and peasants should conspire so that every village and mill is on their side and committed to popular freedom. Good people from every village and mill should know good

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<sup>103</sup> Insurrectionism was gaining ground over syndicalism at this time in the anarchist movement in countries like Spain, where the Federal Commission of the International opted for insurrection over strike tactics, and Italy, where Malatesta and others attempted to raise an insurrection in Bologna in

people from other villages and mills.<sup>104</sup> This, in popular language, is the Bakuninist idea of a federated network of revolutionaries linking and co-ordinating unrest across as wide an area as possible. The defeat of Razin's revolt served as a lesson that a *bunt* could only succeed if an agreement was prepared in advance. Isolated outbursts were unproductive; it was necessary to have purpose and the ability to set up communal workers' orders in all areas seized in the *bunt*; it was therefore necessary to create workers' societies in all the villages and *fabriki*. These societies should know each other and support each other.<sup>105</sup> Elsewhere in an article on the International, the progression made by European workers from isolated bunts to the formation of workers' societies which began to contact each other and help each other's members is held up as a lesson for the Russians to follow, whilst pointing out that the original co-operative or mutualist tactics employed by such societies had proved unable to free the workers from oppression.<sup>106</sup> Thus a more "conscious" Bakuninism reached Russia from Ralli's group, which was perhaps closer to the ideas on organisation that the Chaikovtsy had reached than the *buntarstvo* of some of the more extreme groups in Russia.

In spite of the insistence on uniting urban and rural protest in insurrectionism however, strikes and other forms of struggle were not dismissed out of hand. For example the letter cited above on the Serpukhov strike of 1875 praised the strike, whilst at the same time trying to make a broader revolutionary point. Exploitation and poor conditions are a fact of life in all mills and villages. As the Serpukhov workers won their strike through unity, on a broader scale, a widespread agreement among all workers would make it possible to defeat the common enemy. "If the Serpukhov workers had got together with all the other factories, that would have been something!"<sup>107</sup>

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1874. See T. Kaplan *Anarchists of Andalusia* Princeton 1977 p.110; N. Pernicone *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* Princeton 1993 p.85

<sup>104</sup> "Bor'ba naroda s gosudarstvom" in *Rabotnik* no.6 p.2

<sup>105</sup> "Bor'ba naroda s gosudarstvom" p.3

<sup>106</sup> "Mezhdunarodnoe tovarishchestvo rabochikh" in *Rabotnik* no.7 p.2

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Serpukhov in *Rabotnik* no.8 p.5



So the main usefulness of strikes was in their educational value, teaching worker solidarity. Citing numerous cases from England, an article on the International showed that it was difficult to make a real improvement in workers' lives through strikes; in spite of the size and wealth of some of the English trade unions, the bosses were often able to hold out for longer than the workers, militants were often identified and made unemployable, and workers were often brought in from elsewhere.<sup>108</sup> This demonstrated the need to unite across national borders, and to give up on purely peaceful means. Some workers had acted more decisively during the strikes; sometimes factories had been burned or bosses and scab workers attacked.<sup>109</sup> They also called for the punishment of traitors such as the person who gave away Foma Pryadko in the Chigirin affair, or the weavers who gave away the reading of illegal literature in a *fabrika*.<sup>110</sup> This more violent protest was reported favourably by *Rabotnik*, presaging the tactic of "economic terror" adopted a few years later in Russia by the South Russian Workers' Union in and around Kiev in opposition to the political terror being practised by *Narodnaya volya*. The main lesson to be learned from strikes however was that of solidarity; a strike situation brings workers together, and they unite and begin to discuss and recognise their rights, and the need to build a union of workers of all nations for a decisive struggle to destroy the bosses.<sup>111</sup>

*Rabotnik* did not simply paint a picture of peasants and *fabrichnye* against the bosses and the tsar however. For one thing, to a certain extent class difference within the peasantry was recognised, just as differences within the working class were implicitly recognised by the focus on *fabrichnye* rather than *zavodskie* workers. "He who works least, lives best; the hired labourer in the fields works the most, and lives worst; his boss gets ten times more for less work, and the *pomeshchik* doesn't work at all and is rich."<sup>112</sup> When the *narod* finally understands that nothing is to be expected from any of

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<sup>108</sup> "Mezhdunarodnoe tovarishchestvo rabochikh" in *Rabotnik* no.10 p.4

<sup>109</sup> "Mezhdunarodnoe tovarishchestvo rabochikh" in *Rabotnik* no.10 p.4

<sup>110</sup> Leader article in *Rabotnik* no.11/12 pp.1-2

<sup>111</sup> Leader article in *Rabotnik* no.11/12 p.4

<sup>112</sup> "Mezhdunarodnoe tovarishchestvo rabochikh" in *Rabotnik* no.6 p.4

the tsars, and it has to act for itself, then the watchword will be "a curse on the race of kulaks and miroeds!"<sup>113</sup>

*Rabotnik* also mentions the friends of the *narod*, the revolutionary intelligentsia. Intelligent people have appeared among the *narod*, an article read, who bring good books written for working people, to help them to think about how to escape from the tsars' and lords' injustices. These people need to be protected and hidden from the authorities, because the truth they bring they learned on the people's money, and in return they bring word of popular liberation.<sup>114</sup> They were being arrested for being honest, not wanting to steal from the *narod*, giving up privileges and trying to show the *narod* who their enemies were, and encouraging the workers to get together and do away with the current world and build one without tsars, lords and bosses.<sup>115</sup> These passages reflect the idea of fulfilling a debt to the people, associated with Lavrov, which was common in Russian populism, but also perhaps the disappointment that some of the propagandists in the movement to the people had been given away by the very people they wanted to help. Implicit also is Bakunin's idea of the role that the intelligentsia could play in revolution; only by fully declassing themselves and joining the people, encouraging and helping them to organise could they serve the popular cause, not by leading or dictating.

After the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, the main distributors of, and contacts with, *Rabotnik*, was broken up in Russia, *Rabotnik* ceased publication at the beginning of 1876. Ralli's group of anarchists remained active however, both in the anarchist International and the Russian émigrés in Switzerland. By the end of the 1870s, political revolution had largely won the field from anarchism in Russia, and in Europe the anarchist International was in decline, but for the next few years the Revolutionary Commune of Russian Anarchists continued to produce propaganda.

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<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Venturi *Roots* p.530

<sup>114</sup> "Prikaz tsarskogo ministra nad shkolami" in *Rabotnik* no.7 pp.1-2

<sup>115</sup> "Druz'ya i vragi naroda" in *Rabotnik* no.8 p.1

### 3-3: Later Ventures of the Revolutionary Commune

Since 1874, Ralli's group had been taking on board numerous ex-Chaikovtsy who had fled Russia, notably Dmitrii Klements, Sergei Kravchinskii, Nikolai Morozov and Pavel Aksel'rod. The ripples caused by the great trials in Russia and the Russo-Turkish war led them to work together for a successor to *Rabotnik*, for which the groups' presses were united. This publication was *Obshchina*, which first appeared in January 1878. This was milder in tone than *Rabotnik*, for example using the word federalism rather than anarchy, and was aimed at the revolutionary intelligentsia in general rather than any particular faction.<sup>116</sup> This corresponds to Lavrov's description of a lessening of division among the émigrés and attempts by Bakuninists and propagandists to work together.<sup>117</sup> *Obshchina*'s programme was to expound the ideas of the federalist International, to encourage popular initiative in the struggle for rights and to oppose Jacobinist seizures of power. Revolutionaries should live the life of the people, learn their needs and help them to unite in a federated organisation. As for tactics, which were the main division among Russian revolutionaries, propaganda, agitation and *buntarstvo* were all considered legitimate.<sup>118</sup> *Obshchina* published a broad range of articles from Stefanovich's *buntarstvo* to Dragomanov's Ukrainian nationalism, by which Ralli's group hoped to unite the Russian revolutionaries.

However by now the situation in Russia had changed, and with the mass arrests contacts with the movement there were lost. Increasing numbers of revolutionaries within Russia seemed to turn away from the western movement, and were concentrating on their own political war with the government, which culminated in the regicide of 1881. Ralli's group remained influenced by Communards, the Jura Federation and (through Kravchinskii) the Italian anarchist movement. They praised the "propaganda by deed" of the Bologna and Benevento risings, and called for social revolutionary

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<sup>116</sup> Deich *Emigratsiya* p.6. While Lavrovists would have been comfortable with "federalism" as a revolutionary aim and an organisational form, "anarchy" was a term much more closely associated with a political faction.

<sup>117</sup> P. Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty 1873-78* St.Petersburg 1907 p.177

<sup>118</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.204

propaganda among Russian workers, and open agitation.<sup>119</sup> The main thrust of the movement in Russia was beginning to head in a different direction, to which Ralli's anarchist programme did not correspond.

In contrast to *Rabotnik* and *Sytye i golodnye*, *Obshchina* was not aimed at a worker audience. It was a successor to *Rabotnik* in that it was a Russian-language anarchist paper, but its aim seems to have been to unite the Russian revolutionaries rather than to address their constituency.<sup>120</sup> The émigré revolutionaries had fallen into bitter personal squabbles which dwarfed their tactical differences. *Obshchina* accepted as legitimate "propaganda and protest in as many forms as there are exploitations".<sup>121</sup> The paper sits firmly in the anarchist tradition, rejecting reform, democracy and the *Volksstaat*, and proposing the free union of local and national groups. It also reflects the influence of populism on its editors, calling for revolutionaries to become closer to the people, to live their life, study their ways, character, outlook and demands. It also highlights the Russian peasant commune as the basis for a future society.<sup>122</sup>

In spite of its anarchist position, the nine editions of *Obshchina* hardly mention the word, presumably in the interest of socialist unity. Much space is devoted to the Great Trials in Russia, and a fairly positive assessment is given of the *khozhdenie v narod*, but the necessity of living among the people is emphasised, preferably among the protesting elements of the people.<sup>123</sup> This corresponds with the actions of Bakuninist groups in the south of Russia at the time. Revolutionaries must act against the State and outside the State, and according to local conditions.<sup>124</sup> Propaganda, agitation, all kinds of workers' groups, *bunty*, strikes- all forms of popular resistance are acceptable *because they are popular resistance*. It is pointless not to take part in a *bunt* because one is a propagandist; but nor should one try to build artificial *bunty* because one is a *buntar'*. Only the people can make the revolution.

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<sup>119</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.210

<sup>120</sup> Lavrov *Narodniki-propagandisty* p.176

<sup>121</sup> D. Klements *Ob'yavlenie o vykhode s 15ogo yanvarya 1878g sotsial'no-revol'yutsionnogo zhurnala Obshchina* Houghton Coll. 259 p.7

<sup>122</sup> Klements *Ob'yavlenie* p.4

<sup>123</sup> *Obshchina* no.1 p.6

Reflecting its Internationalist spirit *Obshchina* published reports from all over Europe and from America as well as from Russia. The attempts on the life of the German Emperor were well covered, as was the scale of the German Social Democrats' outrage, "in unison with the bourgeoisie".<sup>125</sup> Like other anarchists, the *Obshchina* group could not make up their minds about political assassinations; the moral force of Nobiling is praised, and the poverty and desperation of Hödel is highlighted (these were the two who had tried to kill the German emperor), but no real conclusion is reached as to the efficacy of the acts themselves. One must expect the unexpected in revolutionary situations, the paper said, and such acts cannot be condemned when one thinks of the death sentences handed down by governments, or the 30,000 killed in the crushing of the Paris Commune.

Much of the journal's space is devoted to Russia however. Reports were collected from all the major towns, the memoirs of a propagandist (which once again addresses the problem of peasant monarchism), articles on Kovalskii's armed resistance to arrest, and a justification by Lev Deich of the decision to kill the spy Gorinovich. The ninth edition, which turned out to be the last, also ran an article by the Ukrainian nationalist Prof. Dragomanov, which called for freedom from Russia as the first step on the road to complete freedom in Ukraine.<sup>126</sup> This position is criticised by the editors in a reply, on the grounds that political revolutions did not lead to popular freedom but to a new set of masters being imposed. Space is also given to Ya. Stefanovich, representing a buntarist groups of south Russia which had been involved in the Chigirin conspiracy.<sup>127</sup> Again the editors have disagreements, which were to be spelt out in a later edition which did not of course appear. This is unfortunate, as an interesting debate could have been had between the *buntari* who believed that the task in the villages was to raise revolts, and those who valued propaganda as well as becoming involved in popular risings. This would certainly have touched on broader issues, like the affairs

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<sup>124</sup> *Obshchina* no.5 p.5

<sup>125</sup> *Obshchina* no.6/7 p.4

<sup>126</sup> *Obshchina* no.8/9 pp.49-56

<sup>127</sup> *Obshchina* no.8/9 pp.33ff. The Chigirin affair will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

of Chigirin and Benevento and the whole issue of propaganda by deed which was so troublesome for anarchists in Europe.

*Obshchina* can be said to be more relevant to Russian émigré politics than to Russian conditions, in spite of its good connections inside Russia and interesting reports from the Russian movement. Overall it is concerned with uniting the various strands of federalist socialism against the threat from Social Democracy. As such, *Obshchina* exerted more influence on the émigrés than on the movement within Russia, although some of those émigrés, such as Pavel Aksel'rod, did return to Russia to boost the social-revolutionary wing of the movement there, which was more receptive to anarchist ideas. Some influence was exerted on new émigrés through the Society for Aid to Political Exiles from Russia,<sup>128</sup> a mutual aid society set up mostly by anarchists and whose founders included Ralli, Aksel'rod, Klements and Kropotkin. Little is known about the group, which continued until at least 1882, and aimed to provide assistance to émigrés in finding work, obtaining passports etc.

The group also wrote some material for the European anarchist movement with the aim of informing European revolutionaries about the history and current state of the movement in Russia. In an article for the *Almanach de la Commune*, edited by Elisée Reclus, Ralli described popular resistance to the state, such as hiding possessions from tax officials, avoiding conscription and so on, and the popular solidarity expressed in the *obshchina*. The main task of revolutionaries in Russia, he wrote, was to try to link the forces latent in the isolated communes. The presence of this institution made it natural that the Russian revolutionaries were communist-federalists. He described the Lavrovist tendency which aimed to create a revolutionary-savant element from the intelligentsia, and contrasted it with those who aimed to use not only propaganda but riots and strikes, and to help find natural leaders to overcome the isolation of communes from one

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<sup>128</sup> R. Kantor "Obshchestvo posobiya politicheskim izgnannikam iz Rossii" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.221

another.<sup>129</sup> David Stafford has described the article as an interesting attempt to parallel the "natural" socialism of the peasant *obshchina* with that of the Paris Commune.<sup>130</sup> However the article reflected the group's lack of contacts inside Russia, since the new tendency emerging there which favoured terrorism and political struggle was not mentioned. In the same volume El'snits wrote a piece on Sten'ka Razin, which also praised the *obshchina* and tried to show the revolutionary potential latent in the Russian peasantry, as well as their socialistic tendencies.<sup>131</sup> Ralli also wrote, in support of Vera Zasulich and her shot at Governor Trepov, a pamphlet which both outlined the arbitrariness and despotism of the Russian government, comparing them to the Turks with whom they were currently at war, and praised what he called "society's verdict on the regime" implicit in the acquittal of Zasulich handed down by a jury.<sup>132</sup>

Ralli left Switzerland in 1879 with his family for Rumania under the name of Arbore. Born in Bessarabia and fluent in Rumanian, he felt completely at home there, and became involved with the revolutionary movement in Bucharest and was at the centre of the Russian emigration there. Aksel'rod reports that although he continued to call himself an anarchist he was on good terms with the head of the Rumanian government.<sup>133</sup> He had little further influence on the Russian movement, but became editor of a semi-official anti-Russian Rumanian newspaper from 1880.<sup>134</sup> He was in some way involved with Bulgarian revolutionaries in the 1880s, including Khristo Botev, and used his connections to expose spies to the emigration.<sup>135</sup> From 1893 he edited a socialist newspaper, the *Rumynskaya korrespondentsiya*, and in 1905 provided assistance to certain of the Potemkinty in escaping to

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<sup>129</sup> Z.K. Ralli "Le Socialisme en Russie" in E. Reclus et al (eds) *Almanach de la Commune pour 1877* Geneva 1877 pp.70-75

<sup>130</sup> D. Stafford *From Anarchism to Reformism* note to p.102

<sup>131</sup> A. El'snits "Stenko Razine" *Almanach de la Commune* pp.33-43

<sup>132</sup> Z.K. Ralli *Bashi-buzuki Peterburga* (reprint) Geneva 1897 p.39

<sup>133</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhito* p. 313

<sup>134</sup> *Deyateli revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya v Rossii. Bio-bibliograficheskii slovar'*. Moscow 1931 v.II vyp.III 1309. We must assume the authors mean "anti-Russian government".

<sup>135</sup> G. Bakalev "Russkaya revolyutsionnaya emigratsiya sredi Bolgar" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.5 1925 p.41

Switzerland.<sup>136</sup> He was involved with the journalist V. Burtsev in setting up the historical journal *Byloe* and contributed to other historical publications about the Russian revolutionary movement and emigration of the 1870s. About his later life I have, regrettably, no information. He died in 1933.

#### **4: Conclusion**

Ralli and his friends were a small but effective group of anarchists who tried to unite the revolutionary movement in Russia with the ideas of the federalist International in Europe. Ralli's early activities from his involvement with Nechaev are indicative of the change which took place in the "radical" wing of the revolutionary intelligentsia in Russia in the early years of the 1870s, as conspiracy and Jacobinism were eclipsed by Bakuninist anarchism. As we have seen earlier, the pressure of events also moved the more moderate tendency, embodied in the Chaikovskii circle, towards a more anarchistic position. This led not only to the decline of Lavrovism in the Russian movement, but also to closer co-operation between the anarchist émigrés in Switzerland, represented by Ralli and his colleagues, and to the hegemony which lasted for the next couple of years within the Russian revolutionary movement of a tendency which took its cue from anarchism, even if on some points it deviated from the ideas of anarchists in the West. Judging by Ralli's writings, the movement to the people was interpreted abroad as an acceptance of Bakunin's ideas, although in fact this interpretation is probably not entirely accurate; students and others went to the people for a variety of reasons and acted in different ways, and the movement was not entirely united under any common banner. Nevertheless it did appear to the émigrés to indicate an acceptance of Bakunin's idea that the revolutionaries should live the life of the people, that staying in university and studying and preparing, as Lavrov recommended, was useless.

It is also worth noting that those of the Chaikovtsy who escaped arrest to go abroad joined Ralli's group, and that the Chaikovtsy participated in the setting up of *Rabotnik*. Furthermore, after the arrests which more or less put an end to the movement to the people of 1874, it fell largely to the anarchists

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<sup>136</sup> S. Denisenko "Potemkinskoe vosstanie" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1930 p.134



to rebuild the movement in Russia; thus the strongest voice in the Russian emigration after 1874 was the Revolutionary Commune of Russian Anarchists, and the first group to attempt to create a nationwide revolutionary organisation from the ruins of the movement inside Russia was also anarchist. It would appear that far from sealing the fate of anarchism in Russia, which one might have expected from the association of the 1874 debacle with anarchist ideas, in fact it signalled to those in emigration that Bakunin's ideas had in fact triumphed over Lavrov's within Russia and allowed the creation of a radical revolutionary movement, and that what was needed now was to organise the work more effectively.

The group's organ, *Rabotnik*, thus tried to apply Bakuninist anarchism to the Russian revolutionary movement and to the conditions of Russia's peasants and workers. Both implicitly and explicitly, it points out a number of important parallels between anarchism and populism, such as the constituency of poorer workers and peasants which both aimed to influence; the role and tasks of the revolutionaries from the intelligentsia; the tactics to be adopted in the revolution; and the organisational forms which should be applied. Perhaps the main difference with what had gone before was that the Chaikovtsy, for example, had worked their way towards a set of ideas which turned out to be more or less anarchist, and found confirmation in Bakunin's work rather than in Lavrov's *Vpered!* In the years immediately following 1874 revolutionaries in Russia were influenced more directly by Bakuninism, thanks largely to the efforts of Ralli and his group. While Ralli's group was not large or widespread therefore, and their contacts in Russia through the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation were short-lived, their importance lies in the fact that the strength of the anarchistic tendency in the Russian revolutionary movement in the middle years of the 1870s was such that in spite of the failures of the movement of 1874, this tendency survived and took on the task of rebuilding the movement more effectively.

## Chapter 4: The Pan-Russian Social Revolutionary Organisation and the Populism of the Mid-1870s

### 1: Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the origins, growth and activity of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, which was formed by Russian and Georgian students abroad, who returned to Russia to continue the work begun by the Chaikovskii circle and the movement to the people of 1873-4. The first section will discuss the origins of the organisation in the collaboration of Georgian revolutionaries and the so-called Fritsch group of women in Switzerland, against the background of the arrests in Russia and the demise of the *Chaikovtsy* in 1874, and of the Russian colony in Zurich. Connections with the émigrés and the decision to collaborate with the “Young Bakuninists” will be outlined. In addition to the narrative of the formation of the new group, the main issues to be examined in this section include the decision of the Georgians to reject the cause of the liberation of the Caucasian nations from Russia and a federal Caucasian republic in favour of joining the Russian revolutionaries to work for social revolution across the whole empire. Additionally, since, like the *Chaikovtsy*, this group was founded in part by a women's circle, the gender issue will be revisited; questions such as the possible reasons for women abandoning the cause of emancipation for revolution, and the influences on their decisions to leave their studies to go to the people, will be examined.

Having returned to Russia to work among the *narod*, the group's activities bring us back to some of the central themes of the thesis. The choice of constituency is particularly relevant, as this group consciously chose to work above all in the *fabriki* of Moscow. The division, or perceived division, between *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie* workers is thus raised, as is the question of the peasants. The group's propaganda material will be discussed in this regard, in particular that which they received through their collaboration with Ralli in Switzerland; *Rabotnik* was aimed at recently urbanised peasants for example. I also intend to raise the issue of gender again with regard to women workers in the *fabriki*; why did they remain aloof from or even hostile

to the revolutionaries while male workers joined them? Was this the fault of the revolutionaries, or were other factors at work? I shall also discuss the organisation and regulation of the Pan-Russian group, comparing it with the Chaikovskii circle and noting its greater ideological homogeneity and more formal organisation. Finally the methods of struggle advocated by this group will be discussed; bunts, written propaganda, the (projected) formation of armed gangs, and the insistence that all forms of struggle be of a "social" rather than "political" nature.

The next section will deal with the fall of the PRSRO and its causes; carelessness of recruitment, the frantic speed of their propaganda and resulting absence of deep consciousness and commitment to the movement on behalf of many of the workers. The speeches made at the "Trial of the Fifty" will be briefly examined. Finally, to contextualise the group within the movement in Russia, I intend to examine some of the other groups which were in existence at the same time, in particular E. Zaslavskii's South Russian Union of Workers. Its formation and roots in a factory (*zavod*) strike in Odessa will be outlined, and its programme discussed. Of particular interest is its mention of political struggle, which Soviet authors applauded, portraying the group as proto-Marxist. The Union's relations with the PRSRO and *buntari* will be discussed and its constituency, which was largely made up of *zavodskie* workers, although Zaslavskii hoped to send popular propagandists to the villages also. Groups such as D'yakov's in St. Petersburg, propaganda groups in the north-east, and finally the second *Zemlya i volya*, which began to form in 1876, will be discussed also. The aim will be to show elements of continuity between the *Chaikovtsy*, the movement to the people and the subsequent formations of the populist movement, and the continuing parallels with, and influence of, European anarchism, particularly of Bakunin. This influence was now more formal and conscious, since as I intend to show, revolutionaries in Russia now had direct links with the Bakuninists abroad, and Bakuninist literature was more widely spread than it had been until 1873. Furthermore, the Pan-Russian Social-

Revolutionary Organisation had its origins in two groups who had been abroad and were strongly influenced by Bakunin.

## **2: Emigration and the New Groups**

### **2-1: The Caucasian Contingent**

The creation of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation in 1874-5 marks something of a turning point in the history of Russian Populism: the beginning of the turn away from loose *kruzhki* of trusted friends towards organisation based on an *ustav* and a degree of discipline. This was in part a reaction to the chaos of the movement "to the people" of 1873-4, where lack of organisation led to mass arrests of propagandists, and it also reflected the absorption by the founders of the group of influences from the workers' movement of the West. The founders were almost all returnees from abroad. As we shall see they consciously took ideas from the federalist International with them when they returned to Russia to fill the gaps left by the arrests of 1874, and maintained a link with the movement through the "young Bakuninists" in Geneva, whose anarchist publications the group distributed in Russia, including the first working-class revolutionary newspaper in Russian. As well as discussing the development, aims and activities of the group, and their connections with the Western movement, this chapter will also touch on the issue of gender, since an important role in the founding and work of the group was played by a group of women students in Zurich.

The origins of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation lie in Switzerland, in the merging of a group of Caucasians, mostly Georgians, with a close-knit group of young Russian women students known as the Fritschi (after their landlady). Ivan Dzhabadari, a student at the Medical-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg, was not closely involved with the revolutionary movement of the first years of the 1870s, but attended numerous student meetings at which subjects like the Paris Commune, Nechaev, and the Russian government were discussed.<sup>1</sup> The meetings were stormy and Lavrovists and Bakuninists clashed, but, writes Dzhabadari, discussions were largely theoretical because nobody was acquainted with the

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<sup>1</sup> I.S. Dzhabadari "Protsess 50-i" pt.I in *Byloe* no.8 1907 p.11

*narod*.<sup>2</sup> He decided to leave the fierce debates behind and, along with four fellow Georgians, went abroad to acquaint himself with the international revolutionary movement early in 1874.<sup>3</sup> Arriving in Zurich they found the Russian colony dispersed; *Vpered!* had moved to London, Bakunin was at Locarno and those Russians who had not returned to Russia in response to their government's decree had left for Geneva, Berlin, Paris, London and Bern.<sup>4</sup> The Georgian students who were there seemed completely unaware of the revolutionary movement, either in Russia or the International; however, a Society for a Caucasian Republic existed, an idea which Dzhabadari considered little more than a daydream.<sup>5</sup> He was more interested in Bakunin and the International and tried to meet with Bakunin, but got no further than his right-hand man Sazhin, from whom however he learned much about the disputes with Lavrov, Marx and Nechaev.

The group moved on to Paris where Dzhabadari, in the spirit of Bakuninist Populism, took a job in a smithy to learn a trade and be able to join the *narod*. The Bakuninist/Lavrovist debates continued here also among the Russian students in the city; at a meeting which Dzhabadari and his companion Chikoidze attended, a group of Lavrovists criticised Bakunin's ideas which they interpreted as jumping in unprepared, without studying or understanding the *narod*; to which the reply came that it was no less stupid to stretch out preparation for decades, finally "going to the *narod* with grey hair".<sup>6</sup> In general the attack on the Lavrovists was so strong that the latter left, indicative perhaps of the swing of opinion against Lavrov and in favour of Bakunin as the movement to the people began to get under way.

This meeting was also the first formal meeting between the Georgians and the Fritschi women. The Georgians had heard that a group of Russian women students wanted to meet them and this was eventually arranged. The group included Varvara Aleksandrova, Sof'ya Bardina and other members of the Fritschi group, who, following the Russian government's decree calling

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<sup>2</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.1 p.14

<sup>3</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.1 p.24

<sup>4</sup> On the Russian colony see J. Meijer *The Russian Colony in Zurich* Assen 1955

<sup>5</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.1 p.24

students back to Russia, had left Zurich to continue their studies elsewhere. Although the women seemed to share the Georgians' views in their attacks on the Lavrovists, little came of the meeting; the Georgians saw little of the women after that since the work in the smithy took up all their time and strength. They also tried to find unskilled work at the labour exchange (a small square in Paris at about four in the morning) but were unsuccessful; day labourers had to have their own tools to get hired.<sup>7</sup> One of the group, Dmitriev, was discouraged by this and soon gave up trying to "go to the *narod*".

The shift from attempting to learn the people's life among the workers of Paris to active revolutionary work began when Dzhabadari and his companions were invited by the Georgian students in Switzerland to a meeting in Geneva on the "national question", to discuss the idea of a breakaway Caucasian republic. Also present at the meeting were Nikolai Zhukovskii, the Chaikovets Lazar' Gol'denberg, the Jacobin Tkachev and several French Communards. Most were Georgian nationalists however, and it was they who proposed fighting for independence from Russia and a democratic, federal republic of Caucasian nations. A minority, which included Dzhabadari, M. Chikoidze, A. Tsitsianov and others claimed that a federation of such different peoples and cultures was unfeasible, and a Caucasian republican movement would divert the social revolution into narrow nationalist aims, antagonise Russians, and cause conflict among Caucasians. They proposed uniting with the revolutionary movement in Russia to try to liberate all countries from Russian despotism and the power of capital. While they were supported in this by the Russian émigrés and the Communards, they remained a minority and had little further to do with the nationalists.<sup>8</sup> However their ideas reflect the focus on economic and social, as opposed to political, revolution which predominated in the Russian movement at the time, and indeed among revolutionaries in Switzerland, where the dominant section of the International was the anarchist Jura Federation. Furthermore, the idea of

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<sup>6</sup> Dzhabadari "Protssess 50-i" pt. 2 in *Byloe* no.9 1907 p.175

<sup>7</sup> Dzhabadari "Protssess" pt.2 p.176

<sup>8</sup> Dzhabadari "Protssess" pt.2 p.180

political revolution for Russian revolutionaries was still associated with the discredited Jacobinism of Nechaev and Tkachev.

Despite the lack of success of the Caucasian meeting, it did bring Dzhabadari's group back into contact with the Fritschi women, most of whom were now back in Switzerland, and who found themselves in general agreement with the ideas raised by Dzhabadari and co. at the meeting.

## 2-2: The Fritschi

The Fritschi women were essentially products of the emancipation movement which grew up in Russia during the 1860s. Many young women, eager to assert themselves and do something "useful", attempted to break out of their prescribed roles by leaving home to work or study. For many this meant being cut off from their families, and in order to survive they joined, or created, student communes and mutual aid societies, whence they could easily be drawn into the radical movement. As Amy Knight has noted, women did not generally become active in the revolutionary movement in Russia until the rise of the Chaikovskii Circle, which, as we noted in Chapter 2, was joined by a group of women including Sof'ya Perovskaya; the nihilist women of the 1860s confined their activities to joining communes, attending meetings, and performing small tasks.<sup>9</sup> However in the 1870s there was a sharp rise in the proportion of radicals who were women; around 15% of those investigated for revolutionary activities were female.<sup>10</sup> Knight attributes this in the main to the women's emancipation movement; the urge to seek independence, and to be "useful" after the fashion of Chernyshevskii's Vera Pavlovna led to study or employment. This forced many women to break with their families, and in joining student communes or mutual aid societies, they could be drawn into the radical movement.<sup>11</sup>

As we noted in Chapter Two, whereas the central demand of the women's emancipation movement in the 1860s was for equal access to education, by the turn of the decade, radicals like Bakunin and Nechaev were calling on women to concentrate on the overthrow of autocracy; only with the

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<sup>9</sup> Amy Knight "The Fritschi" in *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, vol.9 no.1 1975 p.2

<sup>10</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.2

<sup>11</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.2

destruction of the present political and economic system could women, like peasants and workers, achieve equality.<sup>12</sup> Many women did indeed turn to the popular cause, but Knight sees a dual motive; as well as fighting for socialism, there was the need for personal achievement, and the radical movement was the only arena open to Russian women where they could prove their usefulness and be treated as equals by men. To some extent, participation in radical activities could become an end in itself.<sup>13</sup> To put it another way, many women submerged "female emancipationism" into the more general radical/revolutionary movement, but in participating in that movement, they were performing an act of personal emancipation as women.

Robert McNeal notes the initiative of radical men in encouraging women to join the cause.<sup>14</sup> Apart from their general democratic ideas which demanded gender equality, he claims that the responsibility the Russian intelligentsia felt towards the "dark masses" was partially transferred to women as the peasants seemed unreceptive to ideas of liberation. Hence the "woman question" was taken up by radical men, although not to the extent of supplanting the peasant question.<sup>15</sup> Sheila Rowbotham however puts the issue the other way around; for her, "the remarkable participation of women in [Russian] revolutionary groups encouraged a climate in which women's emancipation was stressed as a crucial aspect of the revolutionary movement."<sup>16</sup> While to some extent this is a chicken-and-egg question, it seems to me that the emphasis on women's emancipation as such declines in the revolutionary movement of the 1870s, at the time when women's participation in it was increasing, hence rather than the presence of women in the movement encouraging ideas of female emancipation, in fact it was the

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<sup>12</sup> See, eg. "L'Association Révolutionnaire Russe aux Femmes" in *Archives Bakounine IV* Leiden 1971 pp.320-322

<sup>13</sup> Knight "Fritsch" p.3. Similar "personal" motives can be noted among the so-called repentant gentry (of both sexes) who tried to atone for their privileged social position or education by abandoning it and joining the revolutionary movement. See for example Petr Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1971 pp.237-240

<sup>14</sup> R.H. McNeal "Women in the Russian Radical Movement" in *Journal of Social History* vol.V no.2 (Winter 1971-2) p.146

<sup>15</sup> McNeal "Women" p.147

<sup>16</sup> S. Rowbotham *Women, Resistance and Revolution* London 1972 p.122



presence of emancipatory ideas which encouraged the involvement of women.

McNeal notes the influence on Russian radicals of Chernyshevskii's ideas on relations between men and women, in particular those of "fictitious marriages" and "chaste cohabitation"; sexual restraint and self-denial had a certain moral appeal, and a period of celibate cohabitation with a woman (or indeed women, since many student communes consisted of a number of inhabitants of both sexes, but with separate male and female "quarters"), as a demonstration of self-abnegation, allowed a man to be morally admirable. Thus in this sense women were accepted into the radical movement partly as tools of men's moral regeneration.<sup>17</sup> If women were fulfilling to some degree personal motives in joining the radical movement, it is quite possible that men were also fulfilling personal motives in welcoming them on an egalitarian basis. The Russian government's decree calling women students home from Zurich University and Polytechnic referred to "communist theories of free love" which were ruining the women;<sup>18</sup> in fact the opposite would appear to have been the case, with monogamy and marriage (albeit later than was the norm) remaining the rule within the radical subculture.<sup>19</sup>

The Fritschi constituted themselves as a group in 1871-2. The group consisted of Russian women studying at Zurich university, mostly in medicine. There were eventually fourteen members, and Sof'ya Bardina, well informed on social and political matters and having a strong personality, became the de facto leader. Most of the group had had little contact with radical ideas before going to Zurich; Vera Figner for example wrote that she had gone abroad to be independent and useful to society through medicine rather than to join the revolutionary movement. She did not feel a particular duty to the people; this came later. Her initial desire to study came, she writes, out of an "exalted mood" and need for activity and life, although the idea of being helpful by bringing back medical knowledge to the village did

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<sup>17</sup> Rowbotham *Women* pp.148-150

<sup>18</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.141

<sup>19</sup> McNeal "Women" pp.155-156

occur to her.<sup>20</sup> Bet'ya Kaminskaya was apparently thoughtful, idealistic and extremely intelligent as a young woman, but went to Zurich, like Vera Figner, to study and dedicate her life to science as a means of helping the people.<sup>21</sup> Sof'ya Bardina, however, had come into contact with radical ideas in Moscow, in particular those of Petr Lavrov on the duty of the individual to change society,<sup>22</sup> and the three Subbotina sisters were exposed to radicalism by their mother,<sup>23</sup> who was later arrested for spreading propaganda among the peasants on her estate.<sup>24</sup> Although the Fritschi were not champions of the women's cause specifically, it seems likely that emancipatory ideas influenced their personal liberation of leaving home to study.

The climate in Switzerland was favourable to social interests, with the presence of the International, the Fédération Romande (later the Jura Federation), Bakunin, Lavrov and the exiled Communards. The Bakuninists' library in Zurich was an important meeting place for reading and discussion, and meetings were held there constantly to discuss strikes, the Commune, the revolution in Spain and so on.<sup>25</sup> A women's club grew up which aimed to allow women to develop their powers of logical thought and public debate, so that they could take part in discussions on an equal footing with the men, since its founder had noted that women tended to remain silent in meetings.<sup>26</sup> The group did not last long, however, and some of the women felt that a women-only club would lead to one-sided discussions.<sup>27</sup> The Fritschi sprang up as a group in this atmosphere. Beginning like so many other groups of the time as a self-education circle, the Fritschi studied socialist ideas from Thomas More onwards, political economy and the European workers' movement, in particular its practical aspects such as the trade unions, the history of the International, and Lasalle's German Workers' Union.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> V. Figner *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1968 p.36

<sup>21</sup> "Bet'ya Kaminskaya" (obituary) in *Obshchina* no.6/7 1878 p.12

<sup>22</sup> "Bet'ya Kaminskaya" p.4

<sup>23</sup> "M.D. Subbotina" (obituary) in *Obshchina* no.6/7 1878 p.10

<sup>24</sup> On the exploits of Sof'ya Subbotina see Daniel Field "Peasants and Propagandists in the Russian Movement to the People of 1874" in *Journal of Modern History* no.59 (Sept 1987) pp.425-428

<sup>25</sup> V. Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 (of two) Moscow 1964 p.115

<sup>26</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.69

<sup>27</sup> Rowbotham *Women* p.123

<sup>28</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 pp.119-120

They studied such social and political matters beside their university studies at the time; other groups, such as that around the Zhebunev brothers, wanted to use their university study of medicine or agronomy directly to help the people; still others, heeding Bakunin, gave up their studies to help the people via revolution.<sup>29</sup> The Fritschi were situated somewhere between these two extremes. They attended at least two congresses of the Jura Federation and in 1873 the Geneva congress of the International and also met Bakunin, who was impressed by what he saw as a "new type" and attached significance to the role of women in the Russian revolutionary movement. The Fritschi in turn greatly admired him, although they worked for a time with his rival, Lavrov.<sup>30</sup>

Vera Figner describes in her memoir how, during 1873, under the influence of theoretical studies with the Fritschi and acquaintance with the labour movement, the idea of studying to be a doctor, or agronomist or some other "useful" member of society began to lose its sense, and seem like philanthropy, a palliative for the symptoms of social evils. What was needed was a remedy for their cause, which was that the means of production were owned by a tiny minority, who forced the rest of the population to sell their labour for a fraction of the value of what they produced, leaving them in poverty and physical, moral and mental deprivation. Thus it was necessary, Figner realised, to transfer the means of production to the collective ownership of the workers.<sup>31</sup> These are, of course, fairly standard nineteenth-century socialist ideas; but what tends to mark out different strands of socialism from each other is the political conclusions they draw from these basic ideas, in particular on the *means* of transferring property to collective ownership by labour. Vera Figner realised that it was necessary to organise the people for struggle, since property owners would not give up their position voluntarily, and to propagandise socialist ideas. Her sister Lydia informed her, in the summer of 1873, that the Fritschi had constituted themselves as a

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<sup>29</sup> Meijer *Russian Colony* p.73

<sup>30</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.6

revolutionary society and were thinking of taking action in Russia; Vera joined them.<sup>32</sup>

The group now adopted an *ustav* which was apparently borrowed from that of the Jura Federation, although since it has not been preserved it is impossible to be certain.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the adoption of such a programme indicates the strengthening of the call to action among the students and presented the Fritschi with the dilemma of whether to continue studying or return to Russia to become active revolutionaries. This was the central issue between Lavrovists and Bakuninists in Switzerland, which was being paralleled at the same time within Russia. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the *Chaikovtsy* during 1873 began to move away from Lavrovism towards a more Bakuninist stance, albeit perhaps unconsciously, until by the Autumn they found themselves disappointed with Lavrov's *Vpered!* and more enthused by Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*. The Fritschi women seem to have undergone a similar process; most of them went abroad, it seems, for study rather than for revolutionary motives, but moved away from the desire to study socially useful subjects to help the *narod*, towards revolutionary socialist activity among the *narod*. The difference is that while the *Chaikovtsy* were moved in large part by practical experience of propaganda, the Fritschi were moved by theory and by experience of the anarchist sections of the International operating in Switzerland. As Vera Figner admits, the Fritschi's programme did not take into account differing conditions in Russia, the long history of struggle against capital in Europe, or the role of political freedoms in agitation and propaganda.<sup>34</sup> It appeared to them that political freedoms would make no difference to the position of the *narod*; it was impossible to

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<sup>31</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 pp.122-123. The phrase about physical, moral and mental degradation echoes Lavrov's "Formula of Progress", measured in physical, mental and moral terms. See this thesis, Chapter 2 pp.10-11, and P. Lavrov *Historical Letters* California 1967 p.111

<sup>32</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.123

<sup>33</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.7; Meijer claims the program was copied from that of the Slav Section of the International (which was Bakuninist), citing the same source as Knight. (Vera Figner *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* Moscow 1932) Figner in *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.124 states that the program was that of "any section of the International" (lyuboi sektiï Internatsionala). Dzhabadari claims it was written in Summer 1874 in the wake of the Neuchâtel congress of the Jura Federation. (Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 in *Byloe* no.10 1907 p.5) Whichever is true, it appears that the program would have been anarchist, based on Bakunin's ideas.

<sup>34</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 pp.124-125

demand anything for the Russian people which did not give them bread.<sup>35</sup> So they set out as a revolutionary society on purely economic demands, rejecting the call for political struggle which characterised the Marxist and Lasallean positions in the European socialist movement.

Like their compatriots back in Russia, the Fritschi decided that if they were to become popular propagandists, they had to be like the people in work, food, clothes, manners and so on. While Amy Knight is probably right to attribute this to the group's asceticism, combining socialist aims with moral self-perfection,<sup>36</sup> it should also be noted that joining the *narod* in this way was a central plank of Bakunin's programme; a successful revolution could not be led from outside the working classes, and members of the revolutionary organisation would have to become workers themselves, completely leaving behind their privileged backgrounds.

Nevertheless, when the Russian government broke up the student colony in Zurich with its decree ordering women students home, most of the Fritschi continued to attend universities. While Evgeniya Subbotina returned to Russia, Sofya Bardina, Varvara Aleksandrova, Lidiya Figner and the two younger Subbotina sisters went to Paris to enrol in the University there; the Lyubatovich sisters, Betya Kaminskaya and Vera Figner went to Bern.<sup>37</sup>

The group which went to Paris was that which became acquainted with Dzhabadari and his friends. They also tried to build connections with the unrest in Serbia, by sending Maria Subbotina to agitate there. Meanwhile Lidiya Figner and Nadezhda Subbotina returned to Russia; Vera as yet could not resolve to leave her studies, and still held hopes of becoming a midwife or *fel'dsher* (medical assistant) in the countryside. News of the movement to the people and the mass arrests in Russia in 1874 however soon stirred most of the group who, in 1874, had returned to Switzerland, to return along with the Georgians to fill the places of those who had been arrested.

### **3: Return to Russia: The Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation**

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<sup>35</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.125

<sup>36</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.9

<sup>37</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.126

### 3-1: Formation of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation

It was back in Switzerland that collaboration between the Georgians and the Fritschi began in 1874, when the two groups realised they had similar ideas. Dzhabadari was impressed by the ideological and theoretical preparation of the women for revolutionary action - they knew all the Russian and European revolutionary literature and history - as well as by the number of their acquaintances among those arrested in Russia. Discussing the arrests of the *Chaikovtsy* and the movement to the people, they all decided to return to Russia, but first a plan of action was needed. It was decided to form a new organisation, with links to an émigré press. Dzhabadari, Chikoidze and Tsitsianov remained for the time being in Geneva to build relations with the émigrés; discussions included Petr Tkachev, who proposed raising national revolts in the Caucasus and other borderlands as a precursor to revolution in Russia. This was dismissed, since it would raise national hatreds, rather than uniting the peoples under socialism, and it was also a plan which saw the borderlands as cannon fodder to distract the Russian army, and not valuable in themselves.<sup>38</sup> Dzhabadari returned to Russia in October 1874, while Chikoidze remained in Switzerland to finalise relations with Ralli's press, and with those of the Fritschi who were still in Switzerland.

Back in St. Petersburg Dzhabadari met with Dmitrii Klements, Sergei Kravchinskii, Nikolai Morozov and the remaining *Chaikovtsy*. Klements was pessimistic about the chances for a new organisation, but Serdyukov was enthusiastic and offered money and connections. The hope was to create an organisation of workers and *intelligenty* with as broad a base as possible. Propaganda work was still going on in the capital despite the arrests; an artel of *zavodskie* and rail workers provided recruits for the new organisation, including Mikhail Grachevskii, of whom according to Dzhabadari it was hard to tell if he was worker or intellectual, and Vasilii Gryaznov, who was known as the *barin* since he looked down on non-propagandised workers.<sup>39</sup> These are two obvious examples of the worker-intellectuals whom the *Chaikovtsy*

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<sup>38</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.2 p.185

<sup>39</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.2 p.190

had helped to create. The weaver Petr Alekseev also joined the new group. All of these workers came from an *artel* in the Vozdvizhensk region of the capital.

Meanwhile relations between the Georgians and the Fritschi were finalised in November and links with Z. Ralli's press were established. At the time arrangements were being made for the publication of *Rabotnik*, the anarchist paper aimed at the Russian workers, which we discussed in the previous chapter, and which the new organisation agreed to distribute. Finally the move to Russia was made; L. Figner, V. Aleksandrova and B. Kaminskaya were already in St. Petersburg by now, and some of the Fritschi had already been arrested, notably the Subbotina sisters in connection with their mother's involvement in propaganda among the peasants. Only Vera Figner and Dora Aptekman remained abroad; the rest came back to St. Petersburg.

However for various reasons Moscow was considered more suitable for activity than St. Petersburg. Firstly there were purely practical reasons; the repressions were less severe in Moscow than in St. Petersburg, where the *Chaikovtsy* had organised more extensively among the workers. Furthermore, according to Lukashevich, the workers there were almost all Russian, which made unity easier to achieve than among the more mixed population of the capital; and the number of workers concentrated in Moscow and the surrounding provinces was also an attraction. Finally there were some valuable people there; remaining members of Dolgushin's groups, the Chaikovets Lukashevich, who had been "to the people" and was trying to work among a small group of craftsmen, and Ivan Soyuzov, a representative of what Lukashevich calls the "worker-intelligentsia".<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>A.O. Lukashevich "V narod!" in *Byloe* no.3 1907 p.36

### 3-2: Constituency

Furthermore the *fabrichnye/zavodskie* issue surfaces once again in this context. According to Petr Alekseev and Mikhail Grachevskii, the politically conscious *zavodskie* in St. Petersburg at the time were doing little, posing as students and scornful towards workers of other professions and less conscious workers.<sup>41</sup> These two had found the *fabrichnye* more receptive to revolutionary propaganda than the *zavodskie*, who formed a sort of aristocracy in the workers' world. These assumptions as made by the Chaikovskii circle were questioned in Chapter 2 on the basis of Reginald Zelnik's studies; nevertheless, accurate or not they remained after the breakup of the *Chaikovtsy*'s groups and represent an element of continuity between that organisation and the new one, bridging the disastrous year of 1874. Indeed, it is possible that, since Dzhabadari contacted the remaining *Chaikovtsy* for help in setting up the new organisation, the prejudice against *zavodskie* workers was simply transmitted through them, although Dzhabadari attributes it to Alekseev and Grachevskii, workers rather than *intelligenty*.

The other point about the *fabrichnye* workers, which to some extent distinguished them from the *zavodskie*, was that they regularly visited their home villages, and could thus serve to spread propaganda further than might otherwise have been hoped. Again, this idea first surfaced among the *Chaikovtsy*, but they decided it was possible to go directly to the peasants to propagandise, after the apparent success of Sergei Kravchinskii and Dmitrii Rogachev in so doing. Perhaps the return to the idea of worker propagandists was a reaction to the events of 1874; but whether it was a reaction to the unresponsiveness of peasants to intelligentsia propagandists, or to the conspicuousness of *intelligenty* in the villages leading to arrests, is impossible to say. However the continuity of the constituencies between the *Chaikovtsy* and Dzhabadari's group leads one to conclude that the objective of their activities had not fundamentally changed, contrary to Franco Venturi's assertion that the single purpose of the group was propaganda and agitation

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<sup>41</sup> I.S. Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.169



among the working class.<sup>42</sup> As we shall see, the main lesson which was learned from the movement to the people was the need for better organisation and secrecy; the choice of the *fabriki* of Moscow as a propaganda base was made with the peasants in mind.

According to Robert Johnson's evidence, even as late as the turn of the century, thoroughly urbanised workers were still an exceptional minority in Moscow, and there was a constant two-way movement of labour between the city and the surrounding countryside.<sup>43</sup> His study looks at family patterns, *zemlyachestvo*, *arteli*, the "totalising" institution of the large *fabriki* in Moscow and concludes that although there was stability and continuity in Moscow factory life in the late 19th century, it was not a stability of proletarianisation.<sup>44</sup> Rather, the factories of Moscow and the surrounding provinces existed in interdependence with the villages which provided their workforce. If this was the case, it seems to me that the choice of Moscow as a propaganda base indicates that Dzhabadari's group were still looking to *fabrichnye* workers and peasants as their intended constituency. This represents both a continuity from the period of the Chaikovskii circle, insofar as they were not turning their attentions to the working class specifically (as Venturi opines), and a parallel with anarchism, which as we saw in Chapter 1, aimed to reach the poorest sections of the labouring population, peasants and the poorer urban workers, and rejected the "relatively affluent workers, earning higher wages, boasting of their literary capacities, and... impregnated by a variety of bourgeois prejudices".<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, as Johnson points out, there were problems for revolutionaries in relation to Moscow's workers: the greater insularity of the town's worker-peasants, reinforced by the geographical isolation of many factories and by the homogeneity of the workers' backgrounds; barriers between workers and outsiders maintained by paternalistic employers; and

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<sup>42</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 p.528

<sup>43</sup> R.E. Johnson *Peasant and Proletarian* Leicester 1979 p.50 This study focusses particularly on the last two decades of the 19th century; however, it is not unreasonable to infer that during the 1870s Moscow's labour force was if anything even less proletarian than in the subsequent decades.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson *Peasant* p.98

<sup>45</sup> M. Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" in S. Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* London 1973 p.334

other barriers of dress, speech and background which added to workers' suspicions of propagandists, and the fact that many were housed in barracks often outside of the city.<sup>46</sup> Given these difficulties, had the propagandists wanted to reach the workers *as workers*, i.e. as an urban proletariat rather than as worker-peasants with connections to the villages, is it not likely that they would have chosen an easier target than the *fabrichnye* of Moscow, i.e. the more urbanised and culturally "advanced" *zavodskie*, as the Marxists did later?

There may have been other reasons as well, of course, for choosing the Moscow *fabrichnye* workers as a propaganda target; in the 1870s, labour unrest was on the increase in Moscow, which claimed one fifth of Russia's strikes in that decade. This unrest was almost entirely confined to the textile industry, i.e. the *fabrichnye*.<sup>47</sup> This Robert Johnson relates to Eric Wolf's idea that the development of an industrial workforce still closely geared to life in the villages can produce revolutionary activity; the "tactical mobility" of the worker-peasant afforded by the extra security of village ties, the transmission not just of ideas to the countryside, but of ideas, traditions and cultural forms into the town, and the mix of urban and rural discontents and propensities, can be volatile.<sup>48</sup> Zelnik agrees on the revolutionary potential of such peasant-workers: the resentment of aspects of the official agrarian order which added to the burdens of factory life (such as communal dues coming out of wages, the need to obtain passports, etc.) along with the devotion to the traditional peasant ideal of free cultivation of the land combined with the poor conditions of factory life per se to breed resentment against both feudalism and capitalism.<sup>49</sup> For the peasant-worker these two types of domination were inseparable and must survive or perish together. This provides a more sweeping and radical vision than that often found among more "advanced" workers.<sup>50</sup> This sort of analysis was presumably not available to the propagandists in 1874-5 (although one has to admit it is

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<sup>46</sup> Johnson *Peasant* pp.115-117

<sup>47</sup> Johnson *Peasant* p.124

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Johnson *Peasant* p.158

<sup>49</sup> R. Zelnik "Russian Workers and the Revolutionary Movement" in *Journal of Social History* v.6 p.218

reminiscent of Bakunin's) but it is possible at least that growing unrest and volatility amongst *fabrichnye* in Moscow encouraged the revolutionaries, and we may also say with hindsight that perhaps their choice of constituency was based in evidence and experience, and not only on anarchist theories or populist prejudices.

### 3-3: Work in the Factories

As the group arrived from St. Petersburg and abroad, they began to arrange the means for a closer organisation; in the wake of the recent arrests the need for organisation was felt strongly by this group. The loose ties of the Chaikovskii circle were no longer enough.<sup>51</sup> It was decided to begin systematic agitation and propaganda among the *fabrichnye* workers, with the immediate aim of creating a workers' organisation, which would spread to other towns when the Moscow group was fully established. With this in mind the group took the name of Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation. The name reflected their aim of creating a single federated organisation across Russia to unite revolutionary activity. It was this unity of action and organisation which they felt had been missing from the movement to the people and led to the mass arrests.<sup>52</sup>

Work in the factories began straight away, several months before the group drew up its programme. Petr Alekseev and his brother took weaving jobs, Gryaznov took up with the railway workers. Nikolai Vasilev was an energetic and successful agitator in the *fabriki*; Dzhabadari, Chikoidze, Mikhail Grachevskii and Vasilii Gryaznov also distributed literature, visited arteli, met workers in the inns; propagandised workers passed literature to their colleagues. This was not the solid *kruzhok*-based propaganda of the Chaikovskii circle, with its carefully chosen targets from among "promising" workers. Often a worker would simply show a book to all of his colleagues; however, according to Lukashevich he almost always found an enthusiastic audience, due to the dissatisfaction among *fabrichnye* workers at this time.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Zelnik "Russian Workers" p.221

<sup>51</sup> Lukashevich "V narod!" p.37

<sup>52</sup> V. Bogucharskii *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov* Moscow 1912 p.220

<sup>53</sup> Lukashevich "V narod!" p.39

The demand for books was high, held back only by low literacy levels. The propagandists tried to persuade the workers only to talk to the most "hopeful" of their colleagues, but no criteria were given for who was "hopeful", and there was little time to make careful decisions. Thus books often fell into the hands of foremen, who alerted police. Yet paradoxically it was increased police observation in the wake of 1873-4 which encouraged the propagandists to work speedily and with a consequent lack of care. Often there was not even time to acquaint workers with the aims of the group; they could be taken on after one or two meetings in an inn.<sup>54</sup> Thanks to this, when arrested, a worker often gave in to the police and gave a deposition; he saw himself as in the power of his enemy, as Lukashevich puts it, and the custom of obedience took over on hearing the threats of the *barin*. There was not enough time to imbue a new consciousness deeply enough into the workers before they were seized by the police; nevertheless, Lukashevich advances the theory that those workers who did give testimonies were trying in their own way to deceive the *barin*.<sup>55</sup> Daniel Field has echoed this idea in a similar context; peasants, when arrested or questioned regarding their contact with revolutionaries, often gave a defence of stupidity, saying that they did not understand what had been said to them, or they couldn't remember where they got the book from. This tended to be accepted because the authorities needed to believe that the peasants remained loyal to the tsar, and the revolutionaries were no more than bands of evil-doers.<sup>56</sup> Lukashevich supports his thesis by pointing to workers who, on release after giving a testimony, went straight back to propaganda work. This is also, we might add, a further case of village traditions being imported into the urban context of Moscow.

The women members of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation also began to take factory jobs, against the protest of most of the men. The women would not be deterred however, and Dzhabadari tried to

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<sup>54</sup> Lukashevich "V narod!" p.40

<sup>55</sup> Lukashevich "V narod!" p.42

<sup>56</sup> See D. Field *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* London 1989 passsim.

make arrangements to ensure their safety.<sup>57</sup> Dzhabadari relates how he and the other colleagues of Betya Kaminskaya, the first of the women to go to a factory, felt as if she were being taken to the scaffold, and when they saw her again a week later, they greeted her as if she had been gone for years.<sup>58</sup> Clearly the step was not taken lightly, and despite the egalitarianism of the revolutionary movement, a certain amount of paternalism still existed in the men's attitude to the women. But the women were determined to prove themselves, and the moral nature of their convictions, and their asceticism, would not permit them to spare themselves factory labour. Furthermore, joining the *narod*, living their life and acting on them from within their own sphere was, as we have pointed out, one of the main planks of Bakunin's anarchist programme which had obviously influenced the Fritschi women and the Pan-Russian group as a whole.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, Dzhabadari had good grounds for concern. The factory which Kaminskaya entered, a small one by the Moscow river, worked its labour force of around sixty, mostly women, from four in the morning until eight at night, in return for poor food and pay and dormitories which were damp, filthy and overcrowded. Kaminskaya was unable to sleep in such conditions, despite backbreaking work, and was too small to carry the heavy bundles of rags, which was a part of the job.<sup>60</sup> She conducted no propaganda here; after work the women took an hour or so "to squabble amongst themselves" before going to sleep. Kaminskaya left her first factory after three weeks for a much larger *fabrika*, where she was able to get close to some female and male workers. One of the latter came with her to the revolutionaries' flat, and the following week brought others with him, and began to spread literature.

After the successes in gathering these first groups, fears for the safety of the women in the factories subsided. While Dzhabadari and Grachevskii decided not to send more than three women out to the factories, the others

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<sup>57</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.171

<sup>58</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" p.171

<sup>59</sup> Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" p.350: "The Russian people will accept the revolutionary intellectual youth only if they share their life, their poverty, their cause and their desperate revolt."

went anyway. Vera Lyubatovich and Lidiya Figner attracted the attention of their factory administration and had to leave to avoid arrest. The women propagandists were exposed to greater danger than the men, since the general lack of response from women workers forced them to propagandise in the men's quarters, where they were obviously very conspicuous. In spite of these difficulties masses of literature was distributed and in the first two months the organisation had cells in at least twenty factories. Four or five workers worked according to the programme of the organisation in each factory cell, and flats were rented for larger meetings.

### 3-4: Contact with Factory Women

The question of why women workers did not respond to the revolutionaries' overtures is a difficult one to answer. One possibility is that the revolutionaries simply did not make a sustained effort to propagandise the women in the *fabriki*. According to Dzhabadari, the Pan-Russian group had wanted to expand propaganda into the women workers' sphere;<sup>61</sup> beyond this however there is little mention of women workers in his account, except to note that after losing two activists, he became convinced that trying to propagandise women workers was harmful to the organisation.<sup>62</sup> Lukashevich does not mention women workers at all, although he was propagandising in a *zavod*, so it is quite possible that no women worked there.<sup>63</sup> Cathy Frierson notes that while contact with the peasants caused the intelligentsia to define and sharpen their images of male peasants from a generalised collective typology (*narod*) into more specific individual types, images of peasant women remained largely unchanged as "virago, shrew or victim", a fact which she attributes to the patriarchalism of the observers.<sup>64</sup>

However there were also specific difficulties for women workers in Russian *fabriki* which discouraged organisation. On a general level, as Sheila Rowbotham points out, women's subordination in society and in the family

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<sup>60</sup> "Betia Kaminskaya" p.12

<sup>61</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.170

<sup>62</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.176

<sup>63</sup> Lukashevich "V narod!" p.39

<sup>64</sup> C. Frierson *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late 19th Century Russia* New York/Oxford 1993 p.17

meant that they were more likely to play a passive, even reactionary role at work. Male suspicion and hostility will reinforce the likelihood of this.<sup>65</sup> In other words, cultural oppression, coupled with men's jealousy for their traditional superiority and the economic fact of their relative privilege within the working class, conditioned women workers to accept their economic and social position.<sup>66</sup> Women's subordination in Russia was "absolute and bound up with the backwardness of the country, and their poverty was so extreme." Women were the property of their father or husband, subject to beating, not entitled to own property, with divorce almost impossible. Those women who worked in the city received even less pay than their male counterparts, were forced economically to work through any pregnancy right up to the last moment, and to return to work immediately after childbirth. Casual prostitution was a common means of supplementing income.<sup>67</sup> This combination of economic and cultural degradation may have encouraged passivity.

Rose Glickman makes similar points. Outlining the hierarchy within the labour force, at the top of which was the highly skilled worker, reasonably paid and respected by management and less skilled workers, women workers, who were confined to light industry (i.e. the *fabriki*) were a "race within a race" of semi- and unskilled labour, occupying a special place at the very bottom of the factory hierarchy, looked down upon by bosses and male workers.<sup>68</sup> This she relates to the patriarchy of the village, where most women workers began their lives, and the legacy of subordination in the family, the commune, occupations pay and status. She notes that "it is a commonly accepted generalisation that the most exploited, deprived and hopeless elements of the working class are the least likely to protest against their condition".<sup>69</sup> Women were among these elements. This may have presented something of a dilemma to the more or less Bakuninist propagandists of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, since Bakunin looked to the

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<sup>65</sup> Rowbotham *Women* p.114

<sup>66</sup> Rowbotham *Women* p.116

<sup>67</sup> Rowbotham *Women* pp.138-139

<sup>68</sup> R. Glickman *Russian Factory Women* Berkeley 1984 pp.23-26. Again this is a study which focusses on the last two decades of the 19th century and up to the First World War, and is referred to here only to make general points about the conditions of female factory labour.

most wretched of society as the force of the revolution. Nevertheless even he realised that in the most terrible conditions "man...can patiently endure unimaginable misery and even slow death by starvation; and even the impulse to give way to despair is smothered by a complete insensibility toward his own rights, and an imperturbable obedience...People in this condition are hopeless. They would rather die than rebel."<sup>70</sup>

Other factors should be taken into consideration as well in discussing why women in the *fabriki* were not taken into the revolutionary movement. They rarely formed arteli for eating and housing purposes, and were more likely to relinquish *zemlyachestvo* than their male counterparts and this would discourage a sense of collective identity.<sup>71</sup> The taverns and teahouses were male preserves, for cultural and economic reasons, so family and religious rituals took on more importance for women.<sup>72</sup> Also it was considered among workers and peasants that learning was for men (if for anyone at all), and was merely an indulgence for women. Literacy had little practical value for women workers since it could not win them better jobs or pay. Among workers generally there was contempt for women's education.<sup>73</sup> This would have militated against the propagandists in that a female audience would be unable to read propaganda for themselves, and would quite likely have mocked a woman propagandist who was able to read it to them, rather than paid her any serious attention. Thus women propagandists, meeting with incomprehension and derision from female workers often gave up on this audience and turned instead, at greater risk to themselves, to the male workers.<sup>74</sup>

Finally of course there was the double burden of work and domestic work; if male workers were often too tired to participate in talks and readings with *intelligenty*, for women it was even more unlikely. Family control remained a factor; in the district of Shuya near Moscow, where the Pan-

<sup>69</sup> Glickman *Russian* p.156

<sup>70</sup> Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" p.334

<sup>71</sup> Glickman *Russian* p.120

<sup>72</sup> Glickman *Russian* p.132

<sup>73</sup> Glickman *Russian* pp.137-141

<sup>74</sup> S.O. Tsederbaum *Zhenshchina v russkom revolyutsionnom dvizhenii 1870-1905* Leningrad 1927 p.22



Russian group also operated in 1875, an important factor in whether women worked in factories was closeness to the village. Only in the very poorest households were women allowed to go off by themselves; many worked near to home, or were accompanied at the factory by another family member, such as husband, father or mother.<sup>75</sup> Again, this would have discouraged women workers from getting involved in dangerous activities.

All of the above is of necessity speculative; most of the studies of 19th century factory life begin from the 1880s, when factory inspection figures began. Memoirs of male workers from this period are rare enough,<sup>76</sup> and for women they simply do not exist. And specific mention of women workers in the memoirs of the populist propagandists is rare. This may well be because, as Rose Glickman points out, "populist women felt their duty to women in the present was fulfilled by taking an equal place with men in the revolutionary struggle; the emancipation of other women would have to wait for the success of the revolution."<sup>77</sup>

### 3-5: Propaganda and Programme

Although the group was essentially anarchist in inspiration, their propaganda material was varied. The "library" discovered at Tsitsianov's flat when he was arrested included the *Kolokol*, Chernyshevskii, Lavrov's *Vpered!*, the *Chaikovtsy's* popular pamphlets, the full oeuvre of Bakunin and a translation of Marx's *Civil War in France*.<sup>78</sup> The works which emerged from the collaboration with Ralli and the Young Bakuninists were also there. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Ralli had written *Sytye i golodnye*, a book which in popular style discussed history and the present state of affairs with regard to the workers, the beginnings of the populist movement, Chernyshevskii, Mikhailov, the first *Zemlya i volya*, attacking the Zemskii sobor of the liberals and the authoritarianism of Nechaev, and describing the International from a Bakuninist standpoint. We have also discussed a

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<sup>75</sup> B.A. Engel "Women, Work and Family in the Factories of Rural Russia" in *Russian History* v.16 no.2-4 (1989) pp.230-231

<sup>76</sup> See however, eg. R. Zelnik (ed.) *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: the Autobiography of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov* Stanford 1986; E.A. Korol'chuk (ed.) *V nachale puti. Vospominaniya peterburgskikh rabochikh 1872-1897* Leningrad 1975

<sup>77</sup> Glickman *Russian* p.233

newspaper for workers, the *Rabotnik*, which was published by Ralli's group for just over a year from January 1875. The keynote of the paper was that "the cause of the workers and peasants is one", and it seems to have been aimed at recently urbanised workers, the constituency which the Pan-Russian group was mainly addressing in the *fabriki* of Moscow. The paper attempted to link the problems of the Russian worker with those of his European brothers and with the International.

In the previous chapter it was noted that *Rabotnik*, as an anarchist paper, opposed any idea of constitution or parliament. It addressed peasants forced to leave their villages through lack of land, and related workers' and peasants' concerns; just as the peasants needed the nobles' land, so the workers needed to seize the factories. But it dealt with industrial more than rural matters, and carried reportage on towns like Odessa, and appeals to the workers' movement. It still spoke of Razin, but its main sources of inspiration were 1848, the International and so on. Even the myth of Pugachev was criticised; while his was a revolt against the state of Catherine, he would only have run his own state had he won. So the appeal of *Rabotnik* was not so much to the peasants as to peasants forced into factories; the same social group initially targeted by the Pan-Russians. The paper published numerous reports from Russia on working conditions and strikes.<sup>79</sup>

Like the Chaikovskii circle, and all propagandists and revolutionaries in Russia, the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation came up against what populists came to see as the two great barriers to their cause among peasants and workers; religion and popular monarchism. We have already seen that *Rabotnik*, the group's organ, more or less ignored the former, excepting attacks on the priesthood which drew upon popular ambivalence toward these figures, but seemed quite comfortable with attacks on the tsar, and with attempting to explain his culpability for the existing order which oppressed the peasants and workers. Such an approach was however only used when workers were more closely drawn in to the movement, when the

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<sup>78</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.529

<sup>79</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.531

revolutionaries would try to explain the tsar's support for the landowners, and show how peasant revolts and revolutions in Europe had toppled rulers, that the tsar was responsible for the terms of the Emancipation.<sup>80</sup> It was recognised that although faith in the tsar engendered passivity, it was unwise simply to openly attack the tsar before an untried audience; rather the revolutionaries tried to erode faith in him.

Deborah Pearl claims that religion was in fact the more important aspect, since later workers' memoirs show that loss of faith was a precondition for a revolutionary outlook. Faith was bound up with superstition, the agricultural cycle, the weather, saints' days etc. in a seamless web of belief and custom; to lose faith meant to shed the mental structures and beliefs of the village. This however rests on the premise that to become revolutionary it is necessary to break with the village and become urbanised. Perhaps the fact that the populists did not accept the need to break the workers' links with the village may partly explain why they often chose not to offend religious sensibilities. Nevertheless, many workers who were drawn into the movement did lose their faith; this Pearl explains not by the populists' revolutionary propaganda but by their classes and discussions on scientific themes; the origins of the universe, meteorology, physics, chemistry, Darwin. This new information, which often found a curious and receptive audience shook old beliefs and awakened a new world view, and a sense that traditional hardship and exploitation were not divinely ordained.<sup>81</sup> Zelnik agrees with this assertion, writing that religious feeling would begin to dissolve as a peasant/worker grasped ideas like the age of the earth or man's descent from the apes.<sup>82</sup> If this is the case, it may well be that having learned this from the experiences of the *Chaikovtsy*, who put a lot into such educative efforts, the Pan-Russians and the editors of *Rabotnik* saw open attacks on religion as more harmful than helpful and hoped to rely on more effective means of attacking religious faith. Certainly it had been noted by

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<sup>80</sup> D. Pearl "Tsar and Religion in Russian Revolutionary Propaganda" in *Russian History* v.20 no.1-4 (1993) pp.85-86

<sup>81</sup> Pearl "Tsar and Religion" pp.103-106

revolutionaries like Kropotkin that "the peasants are not attracted to someone who says there is no God".<sup>83</sup> Bakunin had recommended that it was necessary to destroy confidence in the tsar, which he saw as a product of the paternalism of Russian life,<sup>84</sup> but was more cautious on the subject of religion; the propagandist should not lie to the people, and if asked should declare that he was an atheist, but should take care not to offend the religious sensibilities of the peasants. He seems to have felt that religious faith had grown up as a comfort to the oppressed peasants, and that it would disappear once the need for it was removed.

The Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation's regulations (*ustav*) were not drawn up until February 1875,<sup>85</sup> several months into their activity in the factories, and after the arrest of two members, Grachevskii and Soyuzov, which may have spurred them to tighten the organisation. Certainly it dissuaded Dzhabadari and Lukashevich from using the inns to spread propaganda among workers, and from now on they only met well-known workers there. New workers were not made aware of the existence of the organisation as a whole.<sup>86</sup> There were also groups in the localities around Moscow by now and a formula for the groups to work together was necessary. The fact that the group began without a formal *ustav* is seen by Knight as an indication that the group was bound, like the *Chaikovtsy*, by a communal spirit rather than a strict ideology.<sup>87</sup> However while the Chaikovskii circle was a very broad church, the Pan-Russian group was from its inception far more ideologically homogenous; the Fritschi and the Georgians had decided to work together because they found they had similar ideas, and the Fritschi had of course already taken on a programme based on that of the Bakuninist International. The group needed a programme because they were

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<sup>82</sup> R. Zelnik "To the Unaccustomed Eye: Religion and Irreligion in the Experience of St. Petersburg Workers in the 1870s" in *Russian History* v.16 no.2-4 (1989) p.321

<sup>83</sup> Pearl "Tsar and Religion" p.95; Zelnik "Unaccustomed Eye" p.322

<sup>84</sup> Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" p.346

<sup>85</sup> The program is reproduced in B. Bazilevskii (ed.) *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya v Rossii* St. Petersburg 1906 v.2 pp.155-158 and B. Itenberg (ed.) *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov XIX veka* v.1 Moscow 1964 pp.118-123

<sup>86</sup> Dzhabadari "Protssess" pt.3 pp.172-173

<sup>87</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.13

aiming at a cohesive organisation, with principles of solidarity and discipline. They were the first Russian group to adopt such a programme.

Dzhabadari was charged with writing the programme, and he began from the Fritschi's programme, which he noted did not go into methods of struggle but concentrated on the moral bases for social change.<sup>88</sup> The group decided not to outline a vision for a new society since this would be worked out by the people themselves. The concentration was to be on uniting socialist groups against those who upheld the current economic and social order. They also tried to create a strict moral basis to guide the activity of members and the masses on whom they hoped to act. The final document included the controversial point that all members should be manual workers. Dzhabadari objected that it was still necessary to propagandise among the intelligentsia as well; also the presence of numerous *intelligenty* in the factories could prove dangerous to the organisation, which by now had enough worker members to run things in the factories with less chance of being spotted by the administration.<sup>89</sup> But the majority carried the day. As Knight says, the women particularly probably felt a personal obligation to work, in spite of the danger.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the need for a disciplined organisation, any central authority was opposed; memoirs testify to the fear of Nechaevism which still haunted the populists, as well as the influence of anarchism.<sup>91</sup> The basis of the group was an *obshchina* based on absolute equality. An administration consisting of three members would be appointed on a rotating basis so that all members would take their turn and no permanent position could be created.<sup>92</sup> They allowed no form of moral or physical coercion against the *narod* in the preparatory period of the revolution, and opposed all legalised force and any form of Jacobinism. Thus they admitted only "popular" forms of struggle, armed risings if necessary, but also more covert forms of resistance like

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<sup>88</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.175

<sup>89</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3p.176

<sup>90</sup> Knight "Fritschi" p.13

<sup>91</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.178

<sup>92</sup> Itenberg *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.1 p.120

forging money.<sup>93</sup> They referred to bands or gangs (*shaiki*) for looting and economic terror, similar to the armed *druzhiny* referred to in Kropotkin's manifesto for the *Chaikovtsy*. By economic terror they meant the use of threats and violence against targets like factory owners and landlords. As we shall see in later chapters, this was taken up by later groups in Russia, and should also be compared with the European anarchists' tactic of "propaganda by deed", to be discussed in Chapter 6. Although reminiscent of Bakunin's call to make use of the bandit tradition in Russia, according to Dzhabadari, the term *shaiki* referred to free, armed revolutionary detachments.<sup>94</sup> Activities were to be purely social-revolutionary; no "political" action was to be undertaken. However, the organisation would not try to create bunts artificially, but hoped to give social-revolutionary significance to bunts which arose spontaneously.<sup>95</sup> Finally, and perhaps significantly, the disorganisation and deterrence of government forces were allowed in cases of extreme necessity.

On the whole the programme can be seen to be strongly influenced by Bakunin, in particular on the points about becoming involved in bunts. Where this differs from what had previously been seen in Russia as Bakuninism, or *buntarstvo*, is that the group did not propose simply going to the countryside to try to provoke bunts; their aim was the spreading of propaganda and agitation by an organisation operating within the working class and the peasantry, making use of word and deed to raise the revolutionary spirit and consciousness of the *narod*, with the ultimate aim of providing the means to link and co-ordinate popular risings through the federative structure of the organisation. If we compare this with Bakunin's ideas as discussed in Chapter 1, and with those similar ideas propagated by the Young Bakuninists discussed in Chapter 3, we can see that the Pan-Russian Social-

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<sup>93</sup> Dzhabadari *Protsess* pt.3 pp.176-177

<sup>94</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.177

<sup>95</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.179. This point was a difficult one for anarchists in Russia and elsewhere. Compare for example the events at Benevento, Italy, and Chigirin, Ukraine in 1877, both risings which aroused some controversy for being artificially created. See C. Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism* Cambridge 1989, for a discussion of "propaganda by deed" in relation to Benevento; see also D. Field *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* Boston 1989 for the Chigirin affair.

Revolutionary Organisation at least in its aims and intentions was a Bakuninist-anarchist organisation. From the context of anarchism as it had developed in the International, they took the idea of non-participation in legal forms of activity and compromises with the state or bourgeois liberalism/radicalism in the form of political change or reform; in the Russian context they followed the traditions of living and working among the *narod* and of agitation and action as well as propaganda, as opposed to the more pacific Lavrovist tradition with its emphasis on the intelligentsia. It is important to note the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation was the first attempt to build a large-scale organisation after the debacle of the movement "to the people" of 1874; in spite of the failures of that movement, many of its basic features were retained in the years immediately following, but by more effective organisation, it was hoped to implement them better.

Work proceeded at a rapid pace; the group took whatever chances it could to propagandise and recruit workers. For example, Kaminskaya, seeing a lad reading the book of factory rules, explained to him how they worked to disadvantage the worker against the employer.<sup>96</sup> Centres were set up in Ivanovo-Vosnesensk, Tula, Odessa, Kiev, Shuya, Serpukhov, and in the Caucasus. However the Moscow centre soon fell. The hurry to build up the organisation led to carelessness, as we saw earlier; workers were not carefully chosen, but often propagandised en masse by worker-members of the organisation, books often found their way into the hands of foremen and the police and arrested workers, lacking a solid basis for a revolutionary consciousness, usually gave frank depositions.

### 3-6: The Fall of the Group

In Spring 1875 a betrayal gave away the main meeting flat and within a few days most of the central Moscow group were arrested. The other centres survived for the time being but by the end of the year the organisation was destroyed. Not much information is available on the other propaganda sections of the organisation, with the exception of that in Ivanovo-

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<sup>96</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.533

Vosnesensk, the so-called "Russian Manchester".<sup>97</sup> Ivanovo was in an area dominated by the textile industry, and around 10,000 workers were employed in Ivanovo alone at this time. This high concentration of *fabrichnye* attracted the attention of the populists. Work had begun there in June 1874, when M.N. Shreider moved there, took a factory job and along with a literate worker, F. Zharkovskii, began to propagandise.<sup>98</sup> Shreider was forced to leave, but Zharkovskii continued to work with a small group of workers. Attempts were also made to spread propaganda to the nearby factory village of Teikovo, where A. Komov, the son of a peasant, propagandised. The spread of propaganda worried the authorities, who instructed factory owners to keep a close eye on their workers and to look out for revolutionaries and revolutionary literature.<sup>99</sup>

In March 1875, Varvara Aleksandrova and Nikolai Vasilev from the Pan-Russian group came to Shuya to investigate the possibility of setting up a branch there, and Petr Alekseev intended to start one in Ivanovo but was arrested. The Pan-Russians contacted Zharkovskii's group through another local revolutionary, M. Shtal', and the first to come from Moscow were S. Agapov, V. Aleksandrova and Anna Toporkova. They found work and began to propagandise in *fabriki* and the rail workshops. They were well-supplied with literature, but again their hurried activity led to arrests. The weaver A. Andreev had read a revolutionary book, but told police that he couldn't remember any of it; others also assured the gendarmes that they were less than clear about the content of what they had read, although according to A. Kiperman it is obvious that they were dissembling.<sup>100</sup> Some connection appears to have been made with the factory village of Pistsovo, as the group were visited by a worker from a *fabrika* there. The Pan-Russians in Ivanovo were arrested in August 1875; apparently an angry crowd gathered at the scene, before which a worker loudly denounced the actions of the police. The police apparently feared a breakout from the local jail where the

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<sup>97</sup> A.Ya. Kiperman "Narodnicheskaya propaganda sredi ivanovo-vosnesenskikh rabochikh v 1874-1875 gg" in *Istoriya SSSR* v.3 (1961) pp.139-143

<sup>98</sup> Kiperman "Narodnicheskaya propaganda" p.139

<sup>99</sup> Kiperman "Narodnicheskaya propaganda" p.141



revolutionaries were being held, and when they were taken to the railway station for transfer, a large and sympathetic crowd again gathered.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore there was a plan to destroy a bridge to give some of the prisoners a chance to escape from the transfer train.<sup>102</sup> Several workers, including Zharkovskii, were also arrested, and searches and arrests were made in Pistsovo.<sup>103</sup>

Tsitsianov offered armed resistance on his arrest; the first case of such an action in Russia. Zdanovich, who ran the smuggling operation for literature in Odessa, was careless enough to have kept a copy of the *ustav*, which was all the police needed to prove the existence of a revolutionary society.<sup>104</sup> (The group had hoped to pose as individual propagandists.) Held in prison with many who had gone to the people, something of a political think-tank formed, where the seeds of *Zemlya i volya* and *Narodnaya volya* were planted.<sup>105</sup> Nikolai Morozov was already thinking of a terrorist struggle at this stage. As well as the propagandists and workers, numerous peasants were arrested in villages in the province of Kaluga, where Fedor Tyrin had been spreading revolutionary ideas among the peasants on his return from a Moscow *fabrika*, and in villages in Kostroma province.<sup>106</sup> Some members of the group had also gone with peasants to their village during the Summer to work in the fields and propagandise.<sup>107</sup> This serves as confirmation that the Pan-Russians were not only trying to reach the peasants, but had in fact begun to do so, both directly and through their worker-intermediaries.

The trial was held early in 1877 and aroused great public interest due to the numbers of women and workers involved. (Chaos was caused by Valerian Osinskii, later a terrorist, who forged five hundred tickets for the fifty-seat public gallery.) The impression the government hoped to give of drunken peasants led by dangerous dreamers was not at all what the public saw; the

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<sup>100</sup> Kiperman "Narodnicheskaya propaganda" p.142

<sup>101</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 127 tom 1 reel 2 list 115

<sup>102</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 127 tom 1 reel 5 list 246

<sup>103</sup> Kiperman "Narodnicheskaya propaganda" p.142

<sup>104</sup> Unfortunate for the group but fortunate for the historian. The document is reprinted in V.Bazilevskii *Gosudarstvennye prestupleniya* v.2 pp.155-158

<sup>105</sup> Dzhabadari "Protsess" pt.3 p.195

<sup>106</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 127 tom 1 reel 4 listy 179, 198, 217

numerous speeches which were given won sympathy for people who seemed intelligent, selfless and fully aware of what they wanted to achieve. Sof'ya Bardina overturned the government's attack on the socialists; they wanted not the destruction of property but an end to the theft of workers' property, the product of their labour; not the end of the family but moral relations between men and women which only real equality could achieve; not death to the rich but an end to privilege and class rule.<sup>108</sup> Zdanovich linked the struggle for a better life in Russia to that in the West; people were divided not into nations but exploiters and exploited. Russia had its peculiarities but the basic economic problem and its solution were the same everywhere.<sup>109</sup>

The greatest impact however was made by the speech of Petr Alekseev. He was the first Russian worker to proclaim publicly his revolutionary convictions. He outlined the conditions in which workers lived and worked and asked how could they not hate their bosses? The Russian worker had no time or energy left to improve himself by education or reading; even if he could read there were no books. But surely, he asked, no-one thinks that the workers are so blind, deaf and stupid that they don't realise they are being insulted, that others are getting rich at their expense? If they dared to ask for more wages they were sent to Siberia for striking. If they protested at conditions, troops were sent in. Therefore, Alekseev said, the workers had abandoned the government and looked to the revolutionaries for help.<sup>110</sup>

As we have seen, the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, although short-lived, was important in that it was the first group to try to revive the revolutionary movement in Russia after the blows received during 1874 and the failure of the movement to the people. In its organisational forms, and its dislike of centralism, the group echoed both the anarchist movement of Western Europe, and the Chaikovskii circle in Russia. This is also true of its constituency; although as far as we know the group barely began to reach

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<sup>107</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 127 tom 1 reel 5 listy 236, 272

<sup>108</sup> P.L. Lavrov *Narodniki-Propagandisty* St. Petersburg 1907 p.261

<sup>109</sup> Lavrov *Narodniki-Propagandisty* p.263

<sup>110</sup> E.K. Pekarskii "Rabochii Petr Alekseev" in *Byloe* 1922 no.19 pp.

the peasants, it is clear from their choice of *fabrichnye* workers as targets for propaganda that this was an eventual aim, and they thought that workers could propagandise better than *intelligenty*. Furthermore, the tactics of propaganda and agitation, the acceptance in principle of something like propaganda by deed (a phrase which, as we shall see in a later chapter, is almost as widely misunderstood as Bakuninism) and their denial of "political" activity in the sense of reformism, compromise with the state, and any form of struggle which did not directly address the economic liberation of workers and peasants are also in the anarchist tradition. Where they differ from the *Chaikovtsy* in this respect is that the latter came to find their activities more or less paralleling Bakunin's programme, while the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation were consciously influenced by Bakunin and attempted to adapt anarchist ideas to Russian conditions. Their stated aim of living the life of the people, trying to work with them from within to build a popular organisation to unite the revolutionary activity of the *narod*, represents both the inspiration of anarchism in the International on the Russian revolutionary movement, and continuity across the disastrous year of 1874 in many respects. It would seem logical that, given the parallels of the activities of the *Chaikovtsy* and of the movement to the people with Bakunin's anarchism, 1874 would have sounded the death knell for such ideas in Russia; the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation is proof that this was not, in fact, the case, and it would be another few years before the struggle for political change would become the dominant trend in populism.

#### **4: Other Revolutionary Organisations**

##### **4-1: Zaslavskii and the South Russian Union of Workers**

Other currents were however raising "political" issues and the question of fighting for political freedoms. Among these was the South Russian Union of Workers. This group appears to have inherited the mantle of the Chaikovskist group in Odessa, which had been very strong. Poor harvests in 1873-5 had driven many into the town and the resulting unemployment and low wages had helped the growth of the revolutionary movement among

workers.<sup>111</sup> A strike in February 1875 at the Bellino-Fenderich zavod appears to have been co-ordinated by a group of revolutionary workers.<sup>112</sup> The strike was not successful, but a fund was set up to help workers fight for better conditions. The success of this venture encouraged its founders, Yan Rybitskii and a group of propagandised workers, to form a revolutionary group, and for help they turned to the Chaikovets Evgenii Zaslavskii.

Zaslavskii encouraged the workers to set up a mutual aid group on a broader basis, involving several factories, and that this group should become an anti-government society. Groups of print workers, rail workers and gilders, as well as the Bellino-Fenderich and Gullier-Blanchard factories were involved, the membership being around 200.<sup>113</sup> Deputies were elected, illegal literature was obtained and a branch was set up in Rostov. The group's *ustav* demanded political conscience and unity, with the immediate aim of propaganda of the idea of freeing the workers from capital and the privileged classes, leading to the long-term goal of struggle against the economic and political regime, and revolution. Soviet authors have made much of the mention of political struggle, attempting to present the organisation as proto-Marxist;<sup>114</sup> the idea is mentioned only once in the programme however, and is not developed.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless it is true that as the failure of the movement to the people spurred the Pan-Russians to better organised methods, it prompted others to consider a fight for political freedoms. Zaslavskii appears to have opposed *buntarstvo* at any rate, although there was some contact with Bakuninists. The group distributed *Rabotnik* as well as *Vpered!*, and had some connections with the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionaries.<sup>116</sup> Its organisation remained federal and deputies were elected on a rotating basis to avoid centralism, and Zaslavskii's opposition to the rebels seems to have

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<sup>111</sup> B.S. Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz rabochikh* Moscow 1974 p.52

<sup>112</sup> Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz* p.58

<sup>113</sup> Sh.M. Levin *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 60e i 70e gody XIX veka* Moscow 1958 p.436

<sup>114</sup> Levin *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie* p.438; Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz* p.72

<sup>115</sup> The program is reprinted in Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz* pp. 205-207

<sup>116</sup> Levin *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie* p.439

more to do with fear of rash, impatient measures than rejection of their goals.<sup>117</sup>

A point worth noting about Zaslavskii's Union is its constituency; its members were almost all workers, largely *zavodskie*, with a few intellectuals thrown in. However there remained continuity with earlier populist policies; despite trying to portray the group as a proto-Marxist proletarian organisation, B. Itenberg does admit that they intended to send to the countryside workers who still had links there.<sup>118</sup> It was intended that propagandists would settle in villages and gather groups around themselves. Whether this was accomplished at all is unknown, but the similarities with Chaikovskist tactics are obvious.

At the end of Summer 1875 a group of several dozen workers became disillusioned with Zaslavskii's careful policies and joined the *buntari*. The success of a strike in August at Gullier-Blanchard probably encouraged the majority to stick with Zaslavskii however. The Union was not uncovered until December and the suspected traitor was murdered. To my knowledge this was the first case of its kind. Thus the Union left two important legacies to the movement in the South; the notion of a struggle for political freedoms, and the use of terror against immediate enemies. Both of these were to assume far greater significance in the last years of the decade.

#### 4-2: Smaller Groups of the Mid-1870s

The so-called "Propaganda Society" was operating in Moscow at the same time as the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, and had links with it through Petr Alekseev.<sup>119</sup> They included some former *Chaikovtsy* such as Praskovya and Aleksandra Ivanovskaya and the brother of one, Nikolai Armfel'd. The ideology of the group is not obvious from the literature they distributed, but that could be said of many populist groups. Literature found on the arrests of people involved in this group included the pamphlets of the *Chaikovtsy*, Lavrov's *Vpered!*, Ralli's *Parizhskaya kommuna* and

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<sup>117</sup> Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz* p.99

<sup>118</sup> Itenberg *Yuzhno-rossiiskii soyuz* p.111

copies of *Rabotnik*. These last two are demonstrative of some sort of link with the Pan-Russian group; since arrests did not begin until Spring 1876, we can also conclude that revolutionary propaganda did not come to a halt in Moscow with the fall of the Pan-Russian group.<sup>120</sup> Work also continued in the villages after the disaster of 1874; however now the propagandists were more circumspect. Rather than relying on chance meetings and flying visits, groups would send a member to a village to reconnoitre and report back; if the report was favourable, the group would settle for a longer period in the village, get to know the peasants and try to be useful to them, and begin to propagandise the most promising.<sup>121</sup>

Even in St. Petersburg, where the repressions had been most severe, work continued. Many workers arrested in connection with revolutionary propaganda were released, and regrouped with remaining *intelligenty*. Among these was Stepan Zarubaev, a Chaikovskist worker who said that students continued to teach workers after his arrest and release in 1874 in various *fabriki*.<sup>122</sup> He was connected with two students from the Medical-Surgical Academy, D'yakov and Siryakov, who had a collection of illegal literature which they distributed among a small group of workers. The worker Smirnov, who had been involved with the *Chaikovtsy*, brought D'yakov into contact with numerous workers, amongst whom Smirnov had a wide acquaintance. He apparently was exceptional in his understanding of socialism, and helped organise workers at the Thornton *fabrika*. He had known Petr Alekseev, and when D'yakov and Siryakov were arrested, he fled to Moscow to continue propaganda work; he was arrested in August 1875 with the Pan-Russian group.<sup>123</sup>

D'yakov and Siryakov however made a serious attempt to rebuild revolutionary work in the capital after the arrest of the *Chaikovtsy*. It seems

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<sup>119</sup> S.A. Viktorova-Val'ter "Moskovskie revolyutsionnye kruzhki vtoroi poloviny 1870kh godov" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.58 Members included the father of Stepan Balmashev, who shot Sipyagin in 1902.

<sup>120</sup> Viktorova-Val'ter "Moskovskie revolyutsionnye kruzhki" p.59

<sup>121</sup> Viktorova-Val'ter "Moskovskie revolyutsionnye kruzhki" p.66

<sup>122</sup> E. Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy sredi rabochikh Peterburga v seredine 70kh godov" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.1 1928 pp.7-8

<sup>123</sup> Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy" pp.9-10

that some of the others involved in their circles also had connections with the Pan-Russians; apart from Smirnov, the student Aleksandr Naromskii, who took a factory job in St. Petersburg to propagandise the workers, was also later arrested with the Pan-Russian group. D'yakov's and Siryakov's attempts led to the formation of three circles, and the infiltration of several *fabriki* and *zavody*, as well as the munitions factory on Vasilevskii Island. D'yakov's attempts to propagandise soldiers led to the disbanding of two regiments as "unreliable".<sup>124</sup> D'yakov's propaganda was in the classic anarchist-populist mould; the workers should destroy the government, lords, merchants, factory owners and all the rich, share out their property and work the land in common. To accomplish this it was necessary to unite to make a *bunt*, and get the army on their side.<sup>125</sup> Korol'chuk claims that the movement of 1874 had removed the populists' "rosy spectacles" about the *narod*, so that the next move was to the *fabriki*, giving the movement a different direction. There is some truth in this, but as we have seen in relation to the Pan-Russians, it is likely that this was a more cautious way of approaching the peasants, reverting to the idea of popular propagandists and using the *fabrichnye*'s connections with the land, rather than a change of direction. D'yakov's programme of propaganda mentions such things as the law of wages, concentration of capital, competition etc. which indicate that he was familiar with Marx; but he also mentions conditions of village life and the peasantry, the impossibility even of organised workers to significantly improve their position by means of strikes, although they taught important organisational lessons (a similar position to that of *Rabotnik* on this issue) and mention of the continuing poverty and economic exploitation of workers in constitutional monarchies and bourgeois republics would seem to be a rejection of political change. The ideal for D'yakov is an anarchist society.<sup>126</sup> A worker's testimony states that D'yakov had called for bunts which should take place across the country at the same time, so that the army would not be able to cope.<sup>127</sup> This

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<sup>124</sup> Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy" p.13

<sup>125</sup> Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy" p.14

<sup>126</sup> Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy" pp.20-22

<sup>127</sup> Korol'chuk "Iz istorii propagandy" p.24

obviously represents the Bakuninist idea of insurrection. Thus in St. Petersburg as in Moscow, there are strong elements of continuity bridging the period of 1874 in terms of organisation, constituency and ideology, as well as concrete links with the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation which indicate that in the wake of the repressions, Russian populism continued to reject political struggle but accepted a more conscious form of Bakuninism which emphasised the need for strong organisation.

Information is hard to come by on smaller groups and their activities, however police files reveal the existence of a circle in Vil'no, which had relations with the Chaikovets Anna Epshtein in St. Petersburg, and which distributed some of the publications of the Geneva Young Bakuninists, including Ralli's *Parizhskaya kommuna*.<sup>128</sup> They also distributed the *Chaikovtsy's* pamphlets and *Vpered!* The circle apparently had links with the Elets rail technology college, and other members in Grodno, who in turn had connections with St. Petersburg and with a circle in Minsk. The purpose of the society, according to the police, was to highlight the plight of the peasants, and the fact that the solution to their problems lay in a general *bunt*. The circle had links abroad as well, with a group of Russian students at Königsberg university who were distributing literature from Ralli's group also.<sup>129</sup>

#### 4-3: *Zemlya i volya*

The final group of the mid-1870s to which attention should be drawn is the fledgling *Zemlya i volya*. This group will be discussed more comprehensively in the next chapter in the context of the development in Russia of political struggle and the eventual shift to terrorism; however it is worth examining here the circumstances of the founding of the group in 1876, not merely because it corresponds to the time-scale of this chapter, but to examine the new ideas expressed by the group, as well as the continuities which link it to the tradition of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation and the *Chaikovtsy*, and to make the point that political struggle

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<sup>128</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 126 reel 1 listy 1-6

<sup>129</sup> GARF Fond 109 (3-ya ekspeditsiya) opis'159 delo 144 chast' 126 reel 2 list 1



was not an aim of the group from the outset but became the policy of an increasingly powerful faction.

After the breakup of the Pan-Russian group, Dora Aptekman and Lidiya Figner were called to Russia from Switzerland by Mark Natanson, who had recently returned from exile. The two women left for Russia in December 1875, and made for Moscow, where they found the revolutionaries in chaos and disarray. The second breakup of the movement there had led to self-doubt and disillusion, and attempts to restart foundered.<sup>130</sup> In the south, the *buntari* were mostly disorganised and acting individually; they tried to form stronger organisations but failed.<sup>131</sup> Natanson tried to unite the remaining *Chaikovtsy* with Lavrovists, but this broke up after a month.<sup>132</sup> Vera Figner left the city and went to the countryside as a *fel'dsher*.

In the Autumn of 1876, three former *Chaikovtsy*, Yurii Bogdanovich, Aleksandr Ivanchin-Pisarev, and Nikolai Drago began to work out new principles of activity in the *narod*, based on their own experiences. Independently of them, Mark Natanson came to similar conclusions. These revolutionaries were working in conditions of such secrecy that Dmitrii Klements nicknamed them the "troglodytes", because they were so far underground.<sup>133</sup> It was this nascent organisation which accomplished the spectacular escape of Petr Kropotkin from his prison hospital in the Summer of 1876. The result of their deliberations was the "programme of the narodniki".<sup>134</sup> The basis of this programme was that the Russian *narod*, like any other, had a world-view which had formed according to the conditions of its life, and without a change in this life it was very hard to change their outlook. Therefore, it was necessary for revolutionaries to base their activities on the current demands of the *narod*, for example, the land, owned on the basis of labour. Working in semi-intelligentsia positions, such as scribes, feldshers etc., the revolutionaries would use every opportunity in peasant life

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<sup>130</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi trud* v.1 pp.132-135

<sup>131</sup> Figner *Memoirs* p.46; M. Frolenko *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh* Moscow 1932 v.1 pp.130-131

<sup>132</sup> Figner *Memoirs* p.47

<sup>133</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.562

to support the idea of justice and rights. For example they could try to use the local peasant court to express popular will, defend peasants against kulaks and miroeds, raising the spirit of protest and self-respect, whilst looking out for potential peasant leaders and uniting them into groups to lead them to struggle. They also proposed the idea that when the insurrection was ready, it should coincide with a blow to be struck at the centre of government to disrupt the state machine.<sup>135</sup>

At the same time, Aleksandr Mikhailov arrived in St. Petersburg and began his organising efforts. He became closely involved in the new organisation and struggled against "Russian nature", by which he meant lack of care, lack of will or lack of consciousness in the revolutionary groups, in favour of group obligation, discipline and a degree of centralism.<sup>136</sup> Thus the new organisation represents a move away from federalism, although according to Figner centralism was weak at first. There was some disagreement over who should be admitted to the organisation; some insisted on mutual trust and close friendship, in the manner of the *Chaikovtsy*, while others said that this would limit the size of the organisation and they should admit anyone who could prove their usefulness and honesty.<sup>137</sup> Thus two groups evolved; the first, based on mutual friendship, and which included Vera Figner, Ivanchin-Pisarev, Nikolai Drago, Mariya Subbotina, Aleksandra Kornilova - in other words, former *Chaikovtsy* and Pan-Russians - did not last very long, while the second, led by Natanson and including Aleksandr Mikhailov, Adrian Mikhailov and Plekhanov, more recent recruits to the revolutionary movement, would later become *Zemlya i volya*.

Thus there are elements of continuity and change in the new formations after the fall of the Pan-Russian group. The idea of making use of the peasants' day-to-day lives as a basis for propaganda may be new, but the fact that the revolutionaries are still looking to the peasants as their

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<sup>134</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.139. Apparently this was the first time the word narodniki was used to describe the revolutionaries in Russia; see R. Pipes "Narodnichestvo: a Semantic Enquiry" in *Slavic Review* v.23 no.3 (1964) pp.441-458.

<sup>135</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* pp.140-142

<sup>136</sup> "Aleksandr Dmitrievich Mikhailov" in *Byloe* no.2 1906 p.164

<sup>137</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.143

constituency represents a link with earlier organisations. While Natanson's group accepted a degree of centralism and discipline, albeit weak for the time being, Vera Figner's group preferred to organise on the same bases as the *Chaikovtsy*. All still aimed for the classic anarchist goal of a general insurrection, with the revolutionary organisation providing the links between localities; a new idea though was combining this with a political blow at the centre of government, presumably by some kind of armed attack. However, even this idea can hardly be seen as the adoption of political struggle in the context of the Marxist/anarchist debate in Europe. Rather than a seizure of power, the *zemlevol'tsy* merely hoped to disrupt the government's ability to deal with a popular insurrection when it broke out by means of a coterminous bombing or assassination campaign. Even so, Venturi is probably right to say that we can see in Natanson's group at least something like a modern revolutionary party forming, although whether this was the intention of a majority of revolutionaries is impossible to say.<sup>138</sup>

Early in 1877 both groups went to the *narod*, to Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsyn, the Urals, Astrakhan', Rostov, the Kuban' and the south-east. Meanwhile the release of many revolutionaries from the trial of the 193 livened up the revolutionary scene; however attempts to reunite the Chaikovskii circle were thwarted by re-arrests and administrative exiles. Vera Figner and her sister Yevgeniya worked in Samara and Saratov provinces as *fel'dsher* and teacher respectively. Repressions continued however, and they were forced to leave. As arrests continued, the group which was to become *Zemlya i volya* remained the only one viable. Repressions and lack of visible results led during 1877 to a halt in the flow of activists coming to the countryside, and a rural/urban split in the organisation which was to become significant in the years to come.

As Vera Figner writes, the revolutionaries in 1876-79 were not united but consisted of various groups linked by acquaintance.<sup>139</sup> Thus it is not possible to make too many generalisations about a new phase in populism as

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<sup>138</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.558

<sup>139</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* v.1 p.175

yet. Despite new ideas, as we have seen there were continuities also. While the new organisation had a centre in St. Petersburg, the so-called communes in the provinces remained autonomous; their main activity was among the peasants, while a few stayed in the towns among the workers. So the organisational form of the group retained some of the federalism of the previous groups and of the anarchists in Europe, at least at first, and the constituency remained the same also. However the provincial groups became gradually more reliant on St. Petersburg for money and activists, while in the capital battle against government *proizvol* was taking precedence. The stage was set in 1877 for the clash of the two directions of the organisation, that of propaganda and economic struggle in the villages and provinces versus political struggle in the capital.

The programme of *Zemlya i volya* was originally considered to have developed over a period of two years from short "theses" which emerged from the discussions of 1876 to the more detailed document of 1878.<sup>140</sup> However this formulation has been questioned by G.M. Lifshits and K.G. Lyashenko.<sup>141</sup> It is suggested, plausibly in my view, that in fact the theses were drawn up to be sent as a mandate to Petr Kropotkin to represent Russia at the international Socialist Congress in Ghent in 1877. Kropotkin had been chosen by émigrés as a representative, with a mandate of opposing the state, recognising only federalist forms of organisation, and opposing legalistic activity.<sup>142</sup> Such a mandate clearly arose as much out of European socialist politics as Russian in that basically it opposed the Marxist platform. In Russia opinion was divided over Kropotkin's representation, and some objected on the grounds that there was no unified movement in Russia, and that since there was no deeply rooted organisation among the workers, a delegate could only be said to represent the revolutionary intelligentsia. As a compromise, the "theses" were drawn up, deliberately very general; they recognised anarchy as the ideal, revolution as the means, and denied the

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<sup>140</sup> These are reproduced in *Arkhiv "Zemli i voli" i "Narodnoi voli"* Moscow 1932

<sup>141</sup> G.M. Lifshits/K.G. Lyashenko "Kak sozdavalas' programma vtoroi 'Zemli i voli'" in *Voprosy istorii* 1965 v.9 pp.

<sup>142</sup> Lifshits/Lyashenko "Kak sozdavalas' programma" p.8

state; it appeared in the name of the "majority of anarchist insurrectionists" and presented the basic ideas they all shared: all land to the *narod*, to be worked collectively, destruction of the state, and communal self-government. Thus the "theses" were a general platform of all the populist groups of the mid-1870s.<sup>143</sup> It was signed by *zemlevol'tsy*, by Figner's "separatists", the Kiev *buntari* and probably the Kharkov group. This would explain why Kropotkin was warned that he would be sent only a short programme for the conference, not a final platform, and also why the mention in the first draft of the Programme of anarchist ideals being as yet unrealisable in Russia did not appear in the theses, so as not to upset Kropotkin.

The conclusion is that the first draft of the Programme, dated 1878 in the *Arkhiv Zemli i voli i Narodnoi voli*, was in fact the original 1876 programme. This scenario leads us to a few conclusions; firstly that *Zemlya i volya* was operating from an early stage according to a well set-out programme, which included discipline, division of labour and some centralism. It also leads us to conclude that in spite of this, when it came to drawing up a general platform to represent Russian revolutionaries generally, the platform agreed upon was more or less anarchist, and the revolutionaries collectively referred to themselves as the "anarchist-insurrectionists". Thus we may conclude that even as late as 1877, anarchist ideas were still a strong force within the Russian revolutionary movement, and as yet the new ideas of the *Zemlya i volya* project were blended with the traditions of the earlier groups, and with Bakuninist anarchism, and that the shift in the centre of gravity from economic to political struggle, from insurrection to terrorism, and from federalism to centralism was yet to come.

## **5: Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen how the basic features of Russian revolutionary populism carried over from the Chaikovskii circle to the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, and that the parallels of the former organisation with the anarchists in Europe was strengthened by the latter organisation's direct links with Ralli's group and the influence of Bakunin

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<sup>143</sup> Lifshits/Lyashenko "Kak sozdavalas' programma" p.10

and Bakuninist ideas. Firstly the Pan-Russians retained the dislike of centralism and attempted to build a federalist organisation. Although they recognised the need for a stronger organisation to protect themselves from repressions, they did not translate this into centralism and party discipline. Secondly, their intended constituency continued to reflect that of the anarchists; they consciously rejected the skilled, better-paid workers of the *zavody*, in favour of the semi- and unskilled *fabrichnye*, who were in a more desperate situation and less corrupted by bourgeois influences. Through the *fabrichnye* they hoped to reach the peasants; as we have seen, the concentration of their work in the *fabriki* did not represent a turn to the urban working class but was based on the strong links of the workers in these institutions to the countryside.

In terms of their tactical considerations, the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation remained insurrectionists in terms of their ultimate aims; in order to accomplish such an aim, they proposed propaganda, agitation, taking part in local bunts, and providing a federated organisation of revolutionaries to link local protest into a more general rising. All this is of course thoroughly Bakuninist, and very similar to the aims of the anarchists. The newspaper they distributed as their organ, *Rabotnik*, was, as we saw in chapter 3, anarchist in inspiration, and called for the unity of the cause of workers and peasants; this the Pan-Russians attempted to achieve through the *fabrichnye* workers. The attempts to become workers and live the life of the *narod* reflected both populist traditions and Bakunin's insistence that the revolution could only be made within the people; any attempt to lead the people from outside, by a vanguard party, would lead to despotism.

The other groups which survived or sprang up after the breakup of the *Chaikovtsy* and the movement to the people were similar. With the exception perhaps of Zaslavskii's Union, which concentrated on *zavodskie* workers and made at least a mention in its programme of political struggle, groups continued to operate on a federalist basis, aiming above all to reach the peasant masses and the poorer workers of Russia. Even as *Zemlya i volya* got under way from 1876, its attempts to centralise were weak at first, and

again their constituency remained parallel with that of the anarchists. They still hoped to foment an insurrection, linked by a strong organisation, although the idea of combining it with a "blow at the centre" was not in the anarchist canon. However in the confusion and disarray of the mid 1870s after the breakup of the Pan-Russian group, *Zemlya i volya* were far from being the only revolutionary group in Russia, and when it came to drawing up a general platform for representation by Kropotkin at the International Socialist Congress in Gent, it appeared in the name of the majority of the anarchist-insurrectionists, and outlined a basically anarchist programme.

The other main issue which this chapter has addressed has been that of continuity between the period before the movement to the people and after. It might well be assumed that such a disaster as 1874 would have led to a thorough re-evaluation of tactics, aims, means and constituency by the revolutionaries, and this is implied by Venturi for example, who tries to show that the Pan-Russian group were focusing on the workers rather than the peasants as the basis for their activity. In fact, as we have seen, not only the Pan-Russians but the other small groups of the mid-1870s, and to some extent the early *Zemlya i volya*, continued in the traditions of the Chaikovskii circle, and of the anarchists. Their interpretation of 1874 seems to have been above all that stronger organisations were needed, and that the real problem of the movement to the people was its lack of co-ordination, its reliance on individual efforts and "flying propaganda" and the conspicuousness of the students in the villages. This they tried to remedy through better conspiratorial techniques, and in the case of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, through attempts to form a single federative organisation to unite activity across the country. Only after 1878 does the centre of gravity in the Russian movement swing away from anarchistic ideas with the growth and strengthening of the trend to political struggle; but as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, anarchist tendencies remained in the *buntari* of the south, and in the policies of "economic terror" of some groups of the late 1870s. Furthermore, as political terror became dominant during the period of activity of *Narodnaya volya*, this in turn had its influence on the

anarchist movement in Europe as terrorism was adopted as a means of struggle there.



## Chapter 5: The Russian Movement in the Late 1870s

### 1: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in detail the main revolutionary groups operating inside Russia in the second half of the 1870s, looking particularly at their ideologies, tactics, organisational forms and constituencies. Since some accounts, such as Franco Venturi's,<sup>1</sup> tend to recount this period in the Russian revolutionary movement as one of more or less linear development from one form of activity to another, i.e. from propaganda among peasants to terrorism directed against the tsar, the immediate aim of this chapter will be to show that in fact numerous tendencies existed within the movement at the same time, and that it would be more accurate to describe the period as one in which political terror came to be the dominant tendency of several, and that in fact until quite a late stage in this period the terrorists remained in the minority. In the context of the thesis as a whole, the issues and debates dividing these competing tendencies will be compared with those in the anarchist movement in Europe which will be discussed in the next chapter, thus helping to place the Russian movement in a broader European setting.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the strength in South Russia and Ukraine of the *buntari*, in the mid- to late 1870s, and their preference for practical action as opposed to study or propaganda work. The organisations and activities of the Kiev Commune, of individuals such as V. Debagorii-Mokrievich, Lev Deich, Vera Zasulich and Yakov Stefanovich will be examined, along with the spirit of violence and the use of arms which was growing in the south in contrast to the movement in the north. Their idea of using peasant monarchism to revolutionary effect by composing false manifestos from the Tsar, and the Chigirin conspiracy, will also be examined.

The second section will deal with the emergence of *Zemlya i volya* in 1876, which was briefly discussed in the preceding chapter, and will be continued here, looking at the meaning of *narodnichestvo*, programmes and tactics; the allowance in the programme for immediate improvements in

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<sup>1</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 Chapters 20 and 21 pp.558-708

social conditions and for the "disorganisation of the state", which both perhaps held a door open for a "political" campaign; the various tactics of their "colonies" in the provinces, from agrarian terror to joining villages as doctors or teachers; and finally the drift back to the towns and growing centralisation of the organisation.

The third part of the chapter will outline the growth of a "political" and terrorist movement among Russian revolutionaries; after examining the issue of armed resistance to the authorities, and the formation of the southern Executive Committee, I intend to discuss such issues as the politicisation of society in the late 1870s, increasing contact between revolutionaries and liberals, constitutionalism and the closely related issue of the Balkan war. The beginnings of a terrorist movement and the duel with the state will be examined here, and the centralisation of *Zemlya i volya*'s organisation. I will try to unravel the confusing strands of tactics, ideologies and debates within *Zemlya i volya*; attitudes to political terror, political struggle, mass movements and social revolution and economic terror. This leads on to the issues which in 1879 brought about a split in the organisation and the formation of *Narodnaya volya* and *Chernyi peredel*.

The fourth section will examine the programmes, tactics and aims of *Chernyi peredel*, *Narodnaya volya* and the later South Russian Workers' Union. Within a discussion of *Narodnaya volya* I shall examine differing views on the significance of terrorism and what it was intended to achieve. The formation and growth of the Southern Union will be discussed in relation to *Chernyi peredel*, which its founders left after disputes over revolutionary tactics. The themes of organisational forms, tactics and constituencies are of importance here as elsewhere; *Chernyi peredel* and the Southern Union both hoped for a mass peasants' and workers' movement organised on a federalist basis, but the Union advocated the use of economic terror as its main tactic. I shall examine their proclamations to establish exactly what is meant by this, and compare it to the ideas of buntarstvo and the anarchists' propaganda by deed. The issues of popular organisation, federalism, social and economic revolution of this wing of the movement will be contrasted with

*Narodnaya volya's* tactics, organisational forms, constituency, and aims; centralism, party discipline, terrorism, and political change.

In conclusion this chapter is intended to show that far from coalescing around the idea of regicide at the end of the 1870s, in fact the Russian revolutionary movement as a whole espoused an almost bewildering array of aims, tactics and organisational forms. In conjunction with the subsequent chapter on the European anarchists of the same period, this chapter will show that both movements were confronting similar issues and in many cases responded to them in similar ways.

## **2: The *Buntari***

We have mentioned the so-called "buntarist" groups in earlier chapters, as being on the radical wing of the Russian revolutionary movement with their rejection of propaganda and study in favour of the immediate attempts to foment local bunts and link them together in a more general mass movement. In this respect the *buntari* have often been equated with Bakuninism,<sup>2</sup> which derives from a view of Bakunin's ideas as being of random destructiveness; as we have tried to show in the first chapter and subsequently, there was considerably more to Bakunin's ideas than that, and in fact the *Chaikovtsy* by late 1873 were probably closer to Bakunin's views than many of the *buntari*.

The *buntari* or "Rebels" were always stronger in the South of Russia and in Ukraine, particularly in Kiev and Odessa. There were certainly *buntarist* circles in St. Petersburg and elsewhere; however it is not entirely clear how active these were, and in the early 1870s they were overshadowed by the *Chaikovtsy*. It is difficult to say exactly why this regional variation occurred, but a number of reasons may be speculatively put forward. Firstly is the simple fact that the police were much better organised in the capital than elsewhere and revolutionaries felt able to act more openly in the southern provinces, eschewing the more cautious approach of the *Chaikovtsy*. Secondly is the presence of the nationalistic element; not only did there grow up around this time a Ukrainophile

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<sup>2</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.580

movement in the south of the Empire which increased enmity to the Russian government to a certain degree among the educated, much of Ukrainian land was owned by Russian and Polish nobles, and the presence of ethnic difference could perhaps mean that the peasants were even more badly disposed towards the nobility than were their Russian counterparts, a fact which could have encouraged the southern rebels. Finally, as the *obshchina* landholding system was far less common here than in central and northern regions, the poorer peasants were in a more precarious economic position. Thus the *buntari* could perhaps have expected a higher degree of rebelliousness from the peasants.

### 2-1: The Kiev Commune

In Kiev a Bakuninist/buntarist group had grown up alongside the Chaikovskists in 1873 and was centred around the so-called Kiev Commune. The Chaikovskists' activities were apparently much the same as those of their counterparts in the capital, that is propaganda among workers and students.<sup>3</sup> Despite the more aggressive stance of the Commune, members had gone to the people in much the same ways as the *Chaikovtsy* and others in 1874.<sup>4</sup> The Commune was based at Katya Breshkovskaya's house, and was home to most of the illegal Bakuninists; but it was also a centre for Lavrovists and some *Chaikovtsy*.<sup>5</sup> Thus it was a centre of revolutionary debate, and gradually lines of difference were drawn and new groupings weakened the original circles.

The arrival of illegal literature from abroad strengthened the Bakuninists, not only by the influence of *Statism and Anarchy* but also by the general disappointment of the programme of Lavrov's *Vpered!*<sup>6</sup> Most of the Chaikovskists eventually joined the Bakuninists, although they continued to maintain the need for written propaganda. Some of the more extreme Bakuninists denied the need to learn a trade in order to settle among the

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<sup>3</sup> V. Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* St. Petersburg n.d. p.111

<sup>4</sup> A.S. Blackwell (ed.) *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Memoirs and Letters of Catherine Breshkovskii* Boston 1925 pp.41ff

<sup>5</sup> P. Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe* Berlin 1923, p.109. By illegal is meant individuals living on false passports or with none, usually wanted by the police.

<sup>6</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.110

*narod*, or of teaching literacy or propagandising, so literally did they take the idea that the people were instinctively revolutionary.<sup>7</sup> The Commune was apparently not a group as such; anyone who was known to someone living there could join. It was seen as a revolutionary way-station by those travelling to and from the *narod*, or as a place to obtain illegal passports. However this lack of organisation tended to attract those populists who leaned towards *buntarstvo*, rather than the Kiev *Chaikovtsy*. It became the centre for those who opted for immediate practical action. Studying was a waste of time; some even claimed it would be better to forget all they had learned in the past since their intellectualism only hindered them from joining the popular mass.<sup>8</sup> Aksel'rod recalls a conversation with one Sudzilovskii in which the latter claimed that literacy was harmful for the *narod*, since it would enable them to absorb the harmful influences of bourgeois culture.<sup>9</sup> The Commune lasted into 1874 when it was broken up by the police and those who were not arrested moved on to other tasks. The programme of the Commune more or less passed on to the group known as the *buntari* in the wake of the movement of 1874.<sup>10</sup>

As we saw in the previous chapter, the failures of the movement to the people did not immediately result in a fundamental rethink of policy by Lavrovists or Bakuninists in the Russian movement. The goal remained the *narod*; however the mass arrests indicated a need for stronger organisation and better conspiratorial techniques in order to reach it. Hence the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary group adopted an organisational structure with a central "administration" to spread propaganda in the factories of Moscow. Meanwhile in the South the failure of the propaganda campaign encouraged in some the idea of a buntarist approach to fomenting a peasant revolution. Debagorii-Mokrievich and Stefanovich were joined by Lev Deich and a group

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<sup>7</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.113 It is worth noting that this position was not held by Bakunin himself; in his Appendix A to *Statism and Anarchy*, which deals with Russia, the main task of Russian revolutionaries is coordination of a popular rising, but there is no denial of propaganda by word, and indeed the idea of a popular newspaper is entertained. See M. Bakunin *Statism and Anarchy* Cambridge 1990

<sup>8</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.115

<sup>9</sup> Aksel'rod *Perezhitoe* p.113

<sup>10</sup> M. Frolenko *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh* v.1 Moscow 1932 p.126

of women including Mariya Kovalevskaya and Vera Zasulich<sup>11</sup>. They had some links with the Mark Natanson's embryonic group in St. Petersburg, but the spirit of revolutionary violence which was growing in the South had yet to penetrate the more cautious North. In 1875-6 the rebels were again living in a kind of commune in Kiev and were always armed. The Governor of the town apparently knew of the group but kept away, fearing active resistance.<sup>12</sup> They remained contemptuous of reading and theorising, and had only a vague programme of trying to arouse peasant disturbances. However, they were determined that they would resist arrest and where possible attack the most zealous representatives of the authorities. This last idea fed into the terrorist campaigns of *Zemlya i volya* and *Narodnaya volya*, but for now it was not articulated in terms of a campaign of political violence; rather it was a means of defence and disorganisation of the enemy. The aim of the rebels remained social and economic revolution by and through the peasants.

In 1874, Stefanovich and Debagorii-Mokrievich left Kiev after the arrests and the breakup of the Commune, and made for Odessa to start a new circle. Like the Pan-Russian Social Revolutionary Organisation, the main lesson they learned from the failures of 1874 was that better organisation and more secrecy were necessary. Thus they took greater care than before, using code names and insisting on secrecy.<sup>13</sup> By 1875 there was a hard core of about eight; these were joined by others from Rumania and Nikolaev, and by local revolutionaries like Mikhail Frolenko who were attracted by the programme of the group, as well as the fact that it appeared to be an up-and-running organisation.<sup>14</sup>

The *buntari* chose a far smaller geographical area for their initial operations than that attempted in 1874 by the southern groups; whereas then they had tried to spread along the Volga, Don and Dniepr rivers, now

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<sup>11</sup> Kovalevskaya would later become better known as Anna Kuliscioff, activist and wife of the Italian socialist Turati. Debagorii-Mokrievich, who was later to become a liberal, not only wrote his memoirs of the populist movement, but also an interesting account of the revolution of 1917, which has only recently been published: V.V. Zverev (ed.) "V.K. Debagorii-Mokrievich: Revolyutsiya prinyala chereschur levyyi kharakter" in *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 1998 no.5-6 pp.114-128, 1999 no.1 pp.115-148

<sup>12</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.571

<sup>13</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.202

<sup>14</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I p.126

they chose only the south-east of Kiev province as a starting point. Their main idea was to try to organise the peasants on the basis of a demand for land redistribution.<sup>15</sup> Their programme gave no significance to propaganda; the *buntari* were certain that there was already enough "flammable material" in the *narod* for revolution. They felt that they needed only to settle among the peasants, make acquaintances and be ready with an organisation for an armed detachment to support any unrest and try to expand it into a broader phenomenon. A close circle of revolutionaries would disperse among the villages of the region and try to agitate.<sup>16</sup> The first "settlement" was in Summer 1875 by Stefanovich who went to the countryside as a market trader. Frolenko and Vera Zasulich hoped to open a tea-house, while Debagorii-Mokrievich and Mariya Kovalevskaya thought of becoming horse-traders.<sup>17</sup> However most of 1875 was spent in looking for funds and recruits and little agitation took place.

Similarities with the programme of Bakunin and the anarchists can be seen in the activities of the *buntari*. Firstly, their choice of constituency, the peasants, as the poorest as well as the most numerous section of Russian society, relates to their vision of the revolution they were trying to foment: an insurrection of peasants to seize the land. However, as Bakunin had envisioned, what the *buntari* were aiming for was not simply an outbreak of rural violence; they saw their task as *intelligently* as creating an organisation to link local bunts and land seizures into a more significant phenomenon. This idea is similar to that behind Bakunin's Alliance: a general staff of closely linked revolutionaries who, along with the best elements of their local populations, would try to co-ordinate risings into a fully decentralised and popular revolution.

Differences should be noted as well however, which are important enough for me to try to avoid conflating the terms *buntari*, Bakuninists and anarchists. A case in point is the buntarists' denial of propaganda and literacy as useful tools. Thus far in Europe the anarchists had placed great

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<sup>15</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.203

<sup>16</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.203

<sup>17</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I p.127

value on written propaganda, especially in the form of newspapers, and as we have mentioned, Bakunin had recommended a newspaper for the Russian workers and peasants, which Ralli's émigré group in Geneva had tried to provide in *Rabotnik*. Bakunin had long claimed that while the workers and peasants were socialistic and revolutionary by necessity, he also believed that this "instinct" would have to be educated, elucidated and organised by revolutionary groups.<sup>18</sup> The *buntari* seem to have believed that the peasants were ready to accomplish the social revolution; all they needed was the spark. In spite of this difference however, a similar debate would arise in the anarchist movement at the close of the 1870s as the proponents of "propaganda by deed", which had come to be interpreted as terrorism by this time, denied the efficacy of written and spoken propaganda in the revolutionary cause.<sup>19</sup> This debate will be discussed in the next chapter.

The *buntari*, conscious of the need for organisation and secrecy, tried to formulate an organisational plan, with "agents" on the perimeter, members, and an elected council to conduct the affairs of the organisation as decided in general meetings. Only this council would know all the details of the organisation, members would perform tasks set for them on a "need to know" basis, while agents would know nothing of the details of the organisation, effectively rendering assistance from outside. However due to the small numbers involved and their close acquaintance, as well as lack of experience and precedent, these organisational forms were not in fact achieved. Dissatisfaction began to set in, and *buntari* began to drift back from the villages to the towns.<sup>20</sup>

## 2-2: The Chigirin Affair

Things were enlivened for the *buntari* however when they heard news that a village in the *uezd* of Chigirin was preparing a bunt. There had been unrest in this region since the start of the 1870s over land distribution, accompanied by rumours that the Tsar was trying to order a redistribution in

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<sup>18</sup> See, eg., "The Programme of the Alliance" and "Statism and Anarchy" in S. Dolgoff (ed.) *Bakunin on Anarchy* London 1973 pp. 256 and 349 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> *Compte-rendue* of the anarchist congress in London, 1881 in M. Nettlau *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre* Berlin 1931 p.212.



favour of the poorer peasants. Debagorii-Mokrievich and one Drobyazgin made for the village, where they attended a meeting of the elders in a hut. A decision was taken to rise for rights to pastureland.<sup>21</sup> Anna Makarevich, Mikhail Frolenko, Lev Deich and others joined the enterprise. To the essentially Bakuninist strategy of trying to organise a closely knit group of a hundred or so of the best representatives of the peasants in the area in order to form an armed detachment to broaden the bunt and link it to other villages, the *buntari* added a new element: the idea of concocting a manifesto, purporting to be from the Tsar, which encouraged the peasants to seize the land. Thus the armed detachment would be the nucleus around which a rising could coalesce, once the peasants had been spurred on by the manifesto.<sup>22</sup>

However little came of the enterprise in the end. For fear of being discovered, the *buntari* found themselves having little contact with the peasants; while Yakov Stefanovich was trying to organise the "nucleus", there was little for the rest of the group to do but wait. As they had no trade and little reason to be in the villages, the *buntari* came to fear peasant curiosity and began to meet in the town. Attempts to find a way out of this difficult situation came to naught, and in any case there were no funds available to arm a significant number of peasants.<sup>23</sup> Frolenko set off for St. Petersburg to contact the revolutionaries there in the hope of procuring money for guns, but since the latter required assurances about the certainty of the rising, which Frolenko was unable to give, none was forthcoming.<sup>24</sup> He managed to purchase a few revolvers, but found out on the return journey that the proposed rising had been exposed. He headed instead for Odessa, where the organisation was dissolved in order to allow new ones to form.<sup>25</sup> During the Winter of 1876-77, while Mark Natanson and others were laying the foundations of *Zemlya i volya* in St. Petersburg, Frolenko and

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<sup>20</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I p.128

<sup>21</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I pp.128-129

<sup>22</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.218-221

<sup>23</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.227

<sup>24</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.129

<sup>25</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.130

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<sup>20</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I p.128

<sup>21</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I pp.128-129

<sup>22</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.218-221

<sup>23</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.227

<sup>24</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.129

<sup>25</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.130

Drobyazgin drew up a new buntarist programme with stronger elements of rural settlements and conspiracy. Grigorii Popko, Ivan Koval'skii and others in Odessa mainly approved of the programme but did not want to join the organisation; everyone wanted to retain their independence. This was a low point for the *buntari*; however, it seemed that Stefanovich's conspiracy in Chigirin would provide a ray of light.

In the *uezd* of Chigirin, an official land survey had resulted in Acts which allowed richer households to keep their larger plots, while there was some scope for poorer peasants to receive more land. However a majority demanded reallocation of land "by souls" and refused to sign up to the Acts. There had as yet been no violence against the authorities, but a stubborn refusal on the part of the peasants to obey even after prosecutions, imprisonment, confiscations and troops had been used. The peasants justified their refusal to obey on the grounds of their belief in the Tsar's benevolence; the Tsar was the embodiment of what was right in the peasant mind, and any official who contradicted the peasants' sense of justice must be distorting the Tsar's true will. The myth of the Tsar encouraged resistance against the authorities; but at the same time it taught passivity in expectation of the Tsar's true will.<sup>26</sup>

Stefanovich tried to use this belief to revolutionary effect. Rumours of a repartition ordered by the Tsar had been spread by a retired soldier, Foma Pryadko, and this encouraged the peasants not to sign the official allocation Acts for fear of being unfaithful to the Tsar. Stefanovich wanted to turn this passive resistance into insurrection.<sup>27</sup> Making contact with the peasants, he offered to go to the Tsar himself with a petition. The offer was accepted and Stefanovich left in February 1876. He returned in November with two impressive looking documents, the Secret Imperial Charter, and the Code of the Secret *Druzhina*. The first document purported to be an appeal from the Tsar and claimed that freedom with land had been granted in 1861, with no payments and an end to military service. But the nobles had prevented this

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of peasant monarchism and the myth of the Tsar, see D. Field *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* Boston 1989

<sup>27</sup> Stefanovich's account of the affair is translated in Field *Rebels* pp.131-162

and kept the best land for themselves, burdening the peasants with poor land and heavy taxes. The Tsar had become convinced that he was not able to defeat the nobles alone, and called upon his loyal subjects to seize the land by armed force. He ordered them to unite in a secret society to prepare the rebellion, for which the Code provided an organisational form.<sup>28</sup>

The Code outlined an organisation based on small units with elected elders, who would meet in Council and elect *atamany*. The *atamany* would take orders from Commissars who were in touch with the Tsar. It outlined an oath of secrecy and fidelity, obliged members to recruit, to obtain a weapon, to pay dues and to help other *druzhinniki*.<sup>29</sup> After initial wariness of a possible "Polish trick", the peasants came round and recruitment was rapid. While some assumed that simply by joining the *druzhina* they would receive land and liberty from the Tsar, there was concern to obtain weapons for the proposed insurrection.<sup>30</sup> Some villages in the region had a couple of dozen *druzhinniki*; the village of Shabel'niki was completely in the hands of the *druzhina*. New centres formed, and rumours about the society spread. The authorities were aware that something was up, but secrecy held in the villages.

Stefanovich was probably right to say that the influence he and the other *intelligenty* were able to exert on the *druzhina* was limited; once it had begun it took on a life of its own. In order to be involved in its internal life, *intelligenty* would have to be settled in the villages; this was not achieved.<sup>31</sup> Other difficulties cited by Stefanovich include worries about the loose tongues of the peasant women. Women were not admitted to the *druzhina*, but wives were usually sworn to secrecy along with their husbands. Many women did keep the secret well however, including one who spent six months in prison and still refused to reveal the whereabouts of her husband. Drunkenness was also apparently a problem, as well as the embezzlement of funds by one of the *atamany*. However the peasants kept their oaths of

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<sup>28</sup> Field *Rebels* pp.172-174

<sup>29</sup> Field *Rebels* pp.175-178

<sup>30</sup> Field *Rebels* p.148

<sup>31</sup> Field *Rebels* p.154

secrecy and loyalty remarkably well; only when a copy of the Code was found did the police realise that a major conspiracy was afoot. Arrests began, including those of Deich and Stefanovich; however some of the peasants fled and tried to continue the organisation elsewhere.

When the Chigirin affair came to light it aroused a storm of debate among the revolutionaries. Sergei Sinegub, amongst others, objected to the venture on moral and practical grounds; it was wrong to deceive the *narod*, and it did not serve the revolutionary cause to reinforce faith in the Tsar.<sup>32</sup> Stefanovich replied that the peasants' image of the Tsar was imaginary and would collapse as a rising progressed and revealed the reality. The revolutionary had to accept the peasant as he was and exploit whatever revolutionary potential he could find. Kropotkin was dubious, pointing out that while rumours and false *ukazy* were common in the history of popular risings in Russia, they were not a conscious deception but rather could be invoked by peasants as a defence if the rising failed.<sup>33</sup> Kravchinskii wrote that the conspiracy was a shift by the socialists onto entirely popular ground and demonstrated the possibility of a peasant organisation,<sup>34</sup> while others saw its collapse as yet another indication that political conditions had to be changed before work among the *narod* was possible.<sup>35</sup>

Daniel Field points out that the whole affair demonstrated the still-yawning chasm between the revolutionaries of the intelligentsia and the *narod* in whose name they claimed to act, and that their comments fail to consider a peasant viewpoint. Stefanovich's documents initiated the conspiracy, certainly; but beyond this the peasants transmitted and retransmitted his message with their own interpretations. Revolutionaries and authorities alike focused on the activities of outside agitators. The peasants, of course, went along with this, claiming to have been duped. For the authorities to doubt this would have meant a costly and complicated process of punishing thousands of peasants; so it suited both sides to invoke

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<sup>32</sup> S. Sinegub "Vospominaniya chaikovtza" in *Byloe* no.10 1906 p.63

<sup>33</sup> Field *Rebels* p.168

<sup>34</sup> Field *Rebels* p.165

<sup>35</sup> V. Bogucharskii *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov*, Moscow 1912 p.257

the peasants' loyalty to the Tsar. The peasants were, according to Field, making use of the myth of the Tsar to pursue their practical goals of land, tax-relief and self-rule. Stefanovich had perceived the peasants as passive and credulous; perhaps they were in fact cunning and opportunistic?<sup>36</sup>

With the collapse of the Chigirin conspiracy in 1877, most of the *buntari* returned to the towns, in particular Odessa and Kiev. A new mood was beginning to take hold; many revolutionaries in the south were beginning to look to a more political campaign aimed against the government and its officials. As I hope to be able to show in the next section, this move away from social revolution, based on the peasants as a constituency, federalism as an organisational form and with insurrection as its tactic, towards a political struggle, centralism and terrorism was more the product of the war with Turkey than the influence of *Zemlya i volya* in the north of the country. In fact the centralist, terrorist and political element of *Zemlya i volya*, which was to become *Narodnaya volya* when the organisation split, remained a minority faction until 1879, and the peasant-based social-revolutionary element continued to be active during the period of *Narodnaya volya*. Furthermore, evidence from police files reveals that the *buntari* did not simply lay down and die, or join the political revolutionaries upon returning to the towns, although I have found no further organised attempts by them to reach the peasants. Apart from St. Petersburg, where the "buntarist" group noted by the Third Section as having good material means and growing membership was probably in fact *Zemlya i volya*,<sup>37</sup> the police noted buntarist groups in Chernigov and in particular Rostov-on-Don, where in 1878 propaganda was apparently largely in the hands of the *buntari*.<sup>38</sup> *Zemlya i volya* had started an affiliated group in Rostov but this had been broken up in 1877,<sup>39</sup> although it is not impossible of course that the group in question had links with *Zemlya i volya*. The circle apparently had a

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<sup>36</sup> Field *Rebels* p.210

<sup>37</sup> GARF Fond 109, III ekspeditsiya, opis' 163, ed. khr. 299 l.1

<sup>38</sup> GARF Fond 109, III ekspeditsiya, opis' 163, ed. khr. 299 l.3

<sup>39</sup> M.R. Popov *Zapiski zemlevol'tsa* Moscow 1933 p.162

fund and a library, and the organisation was noted as being "cunningly designed."<sup>40</sup>

What this reveals is not only that buntarstvo continued as a strand of revolutionary activity in the South of Russia alongside the growth of a movement which emphasised political goals, and of the "colonist" movement of *Zemlya i volya* in the provinces (see below), but that they seem to have been prepared to include workers in the towns in their constituency. Unfortunately I found no evidence to show whether they concentrated on *fabrichnye* or *zavodskie* workers, or both. The fact that buntarstvo continued would appear to contradict Venturi's assertion that the *buntari* underwent a transformation and ceased thinking of mass action in the countryside, and instead concentrated on the freeing of prisoners and the killing of spies, which eventually led to the terrorist movement.<sup>41</sup> Certainly some did; Mikhail Frolenko freed Deich, Stefanovich and Bokhanovskii from Kharkov prison, where they were being held in connection with the Chigirin conspiracy, by getting a job as a prison warder and simply letting them out by the front gate. Frolenko went on to become an important member of *Zemlya i volya* and joined the political/terrorist wing when the split occurred. However those he freed, as well as other leading *buntari* like Vera Zasulich, remained for now convinced of the need to act among the peasants and create a mass movement on a federalist basis, to attack economic oppression rather than focusing on immediate political conditions, and thus later became leading figures in *Chernyi peredel*.

### **3: *Zemlya i volya***

As noted in the previous chapter, *Zemlya i volya* began to achieve organised form in St. Petersburg late in 1876, and included elements of both continuity and change as compared with the period 1873-5, from the *Chaikovtsy*, the movement to the people and the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation. In this section I intend to examine programmes, *ustavy*, and journalism of *Zemlya i volya* to elucidate the debates which

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<sup>40</sup> Popov *Zapiski zemlevoletsa* pp. 112-7

<sup>41</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.572

came to take place within the organisation which led to its ultimate split. Issues of constituency, organisation and tactics, and in particular the question of political versus social revolution will be shown to be the main points of disagreement; ultimately comparison between the debates within *Zemlya i volya* described in this chapter, and those within the anarchist movement which will be examined in the next, will form a mainstay of this thesis' contention that the Russian socialist movement should be seen in the more general context of European socialism. Furthermore, I also hope to show that much (although not all) of the impetus towards terrorism and political struggle came from outside of *Zemlya i volya*, from groups operating in Odessa and Kiev, which, although they had links with *Zemlya i volya*, were not full members, and that the majority of *zemlevol'tsy* were opposed to, or at least dubious about, political struggle and terror up to the time of the split in 1879. Thus while agreeing with Deborah Hardy's assertion that terrorism was not a result of failed work in the villages, I will modify somewhat her argument that it was rooted in the existence of a separate "disorganisation squad" within *Zemlya i volya* by noting external influences.<sup>42</sup> There will also be some discussion of the intentions behind the use of violence. Overall, this will reinforce this chapter's argument, that the linear development of the Russian movement described by Venturi from propaganda, through "populism"<sup>43</sup> to terrorism, with each development prompted by the failures of the last, will be shown to be inadequate to describe the true state of the Russian revolutionary movement in the late 1870s.

### 3-1: Narodnichestvo

The first programme of Mark Natanson's new group was drawn up at the end of 1876. As we have noted, it is now accepted that this programme was not that published in *Arkhiv Zemli i voli i Narodnoi voli*<sup>44</sup> as the first programme, but that which was then thought to be a draft of the second

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<sup>42</sup> See D. Hardy *Land and Freedom* New York 1987

<sup>43</sup> The use of the terms "populism" and "populist" will be discussed below.

<sup>44</sup> S.N. Valk (ed.) *Arkhiv "Zemli i voli" i "Narodnoi voli"* Moscow 1932 p.53



programme.<sup>45</sup> This means that *Zemlya i volya* retained more or less the same programme throughout its existence, since there is little difference between the 1876 and 1878 versions. Natanson takes most of the credit for reorganising the revolutionaries after the mass arrests of 1874 and the collapse of the Pan-Russian group. He pulled together revolutionaries in St. Petersburg and abroad, contacting many old comrades and convincing many émigrés to return, including Vera Figner,<sup>46</sup> and travelled Russia building connections with revolutionary groups.<sup>47</sup> Vera Figner also gathered a circle which included propagandists like Yurii Bogdanovich and Ivanchin-Pisarev. Both groups embarked on an analysis of 1874 and concluded that the main problem was the lack of co-ordination of ideas and goals; the movement to the people had had no programme. The second criticism was that the propagandists had been naive in trying to teach illiterate peasants about socialism and theories. The new programme was, as Pavel Aksel'rod writes, "a reaction against an excessively abstract attitude" by earlier propagandists, and an admission that few of the people of 1874 knew the conditions, history, views and morals of the *narod* among whom they hoped to propagandise.<sup>48</sup> They also criticised "flying propaganda", and noted that at least settled propagandists had been able to make a little progress in their smithies and carpentry artels. Both groups thus decided to settle among the peasants and work slowly.<sup>49</sup>

Efforts would be organised around the specific practical need of the peasant himself. They continued to believe, however, that ultimately the peasants wanted land and a free federation of communes.<sup>50</sup> Cathy Frierson writes that one of the lessons for the populists of 1874 had been the recognition that the *narod* was neither homogeneous nor passive, but had a distinct set of needs, based around daily material want, lower taxes and the

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<sup>45</sup> *Arkhiv "Zemli i voli" i "Narodnoi voli"* pp.54-57. This programme is republished, correctly dated 1876, in S.S. Volk (ed.) *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70kh godov XIX veka* v.2 Moscow/Leningrad 1965 pp.27-33

<sup>46</sup> V. Figner *Zapechatlennyyi trud* Moscow 1964 p.132

<sup>47</sup> Hardy *Land* pp.6-7

<sup>48</sup> RTsKhIDNI Fond 361 opis' 1 delo 3: P. Aksel'rod *Razvitie sotsial'no-revolutsionnogo dvizheniya v Rossii* n.p. 1880 l.15

<sup>49</sup> Hardy *Land* pp.11-16

<sup>50</sup> Hardy *Land* p.20

desire for land. The next wave of "colonists" wanted to develop these material needs into a platform of action.<sup>51</sup> Figner describes the new programme as advocating action based on the attitudes and demands of the peasants at a given moment, which, it was assumed, would be largely based on the desire for the land to be taken into the commune.<sup>52</sup> Working in semi-intelligentsia positions in the villages (scribe, *fel'dsher*), the revolutionaries should make use of every chance in peasant life to support the idea of justice and rights, beginning with legal struggles in the peasant courts for example. This would give an opportunity to raise feelings of self-respect and protest, as well as bringing forth leaders who could be united into groups to lead more revolutionary forms of struggle.<sup>53</sup> It was this desire to begin from a basis of the current immediate demands of the peasants which gave rise to the term "narodnichestvo", usually translated as populism. Although this term is now used to cover more or less the whole revolutionary movement of the 1870s, at the time it was specific to those groups who hoped to base their activity on peasant demands and, as we shall see, was also later used to distinguish those who desired a peasants' and workers' movement and social and economic revolution, from those who concentrated on political struggle.<sup>54</sup>

### 3-2: The Programme of *Zemlya i volya*

It appears that the programme of *Zemlya i volya* was drawn up at the end of 1876 by Natanson's and Figner's groups. It opens by proclaiming the sympathy of its authors for the anarchists in the Western socialist movement; "of all the types of West European socialism, we fully sympathise with the federalist International, that is, the anarchists"; however, their ideals could not yet be fully realised in Russia.<sup>55</sup> Venturi calls this a "formal homage to the Bakuninist tradition", before the real programme is outlined.<sup>56</sup> However in the

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<sup>51</sup> C. Frierson *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late 19th Century Russia* New York/Oxford 1993 pp.46-47

<sup>52</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.140

<sup>53</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.141

<sup>54</sup> On the use of the term *narodnichestvo* see R. Pipes "Narodnichestvo: a Semantic Enquiry" in *Slavic Review* v.23 no.3 (1964) pp.441-458

<sup>55</sup> Volk *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.2 p.27

<sup>56</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.611

light of this thesis' study of Bakunin in Chapter 1, it may be more accurate to see the statement as a rejection of *buntarstvo*, reflecting the need to organise, propagandise and agitate among the Russian people rather than assuming that a revolutionary anarchist sensibility already existed among them.

The programme stated that the revolutionary party could only be influential if it based itself in popular demands, and the historically created political and economic ideals of the *narod*. However, it went on, the basic character of the Russian *narod* was so socialist that the fulfilment of their demands would lay a strong foundation for the socialist cause.<sup>57</sup> Thus, although Deborah Hardy claims that the idea of slowly organising and educating the peasants was Lavrovist, rather than Bakuninist,<sup>58</sup> the authors of this programme seem to have retained Bakunin's idea that poor workers and peasants were fundamentally socialist by virtue of their historical experience and socio-economic position, and that they needed to be educated only to organise their struggle. This seems to have been the aim of the adherents of the 1876 programme; not to teach the peasants the theories of socialism, but to gradually bring them to a recognition of their position and help them to organise to escape it.

The programme stated that since the popular view was opposed to private landownership in favour of its ownership by those who worked it, the party must demand that land be transferred to the rural working class (*raboochee soslovie*) and equitably distributed.<sup>59</sup> And since the current state order contradicted the striving of the *narod* towards the autonomy of the commune and its free integration into larger social units, the party must demand the transfer of all social functions to the commune, i.e. full self-government. This essentially anarchist demand was qualified, however; since not all communes had reached such a level of development where full self-government was possible, it would be left to each to decide how much

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<sup>57</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.2 p.27

<sup>58</sup> Hardy *Land* p.18

<sup>59</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.2 p.28

power to cede to any local government.<sup>60</sup> Thus "Land and Freedom" was the slogan to be inscribed on the revolutionaries' banner, reflecting popular demands, rather than the high ideals of socialism or anarchy.

According to the programme, these demands necessitated a violent revolution, which must take place as soon as possible because capitalism was developing under government protection, and bourgeois civilisation threatened both the commune and the popular world-view. Since the *narod* was disunited and surrounded by various, mostly economic, forces, the task of the revolutionaries was to organise the revolutionary elements within the *narod* and link them to already existing popular organisations with a revolutionary character, such as sects or bandit gangs.<sup>61</sup> This again perhaps reflects Bakunin's view of the *razboi* as a form of popular protest.<sup>62</sup> The second task was to weaken and disorganise government forces, without which the success of a rising could not be guaranteed.

It is this second task, the disorganisation of the government, which has been noted as the root of *Narodnaya volya*'s later campaign of political terror.<sup>63</sup> There is some truth in this, in that a separate terrorist squad grew out of the "disorganising group"; however, disorganisation of the government was at the time of writing the programme given secondary importance to that of organising the peasants, and furthermore did not imply a political campaign. The programme proposed infiltrating the army and the bureaucracy, the elimination of the most harmful members of government, and at the time of a rising, a decisive blow at the centre of government. Although the last two points are certainly significant in that they address the problem of the power of the government to disrupt revolutionary activity, they are both qualitatively different from the later campaign of *Narodnaya volya*, since they are essentially designed to defend the organisation of a *social* revolution; particularly able pro-government figures are to be eliminated to

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<sup>60</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.2 p.28

<sup>61</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.2 pp.28-29

<sup>62</sup> See eg. M. Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" in Dolgoff *Bakunin* p.347

<sup>63</sup> Hardy *Land* p.47; Venturi *Roots* p.574. Venturi, however, refers here to the "theses" of 1877 which were assumed at the time of writing to be the original programme of *Zemlya i volya*, a mistake which has not been corrected in subsequent editions.

prevent damage to the revolutionary organisation, and at the time of the social revolution some sort of direct attack on the government would disrupt attempts to put down that revolution by removing the leaders of the reaction. As we shall see below, *Narodnaya volya*'s campaign was intended to be a systematic campaign of terror to try to obtain *political* change. According to Hardy, the idea of a blow at the centre at the time of a rising was not originally part of the plans of either Figner's or Natanson's groups, but was suggested at a joint meeting, possibly by Kablits.<sup>64</sup> This is not to suggest that there was nothing new in *Zemlya i volya*, or that the society was completely Bakuninist, as O.V. Aptekman claimed,<sup>65</sup> but that it focused on social, not political revolution, and in so far as it addressed political forms, it did so only in recognising that it had to defend itself from the government.

### 3-3: Organisation

The new society did not as yet produce an *ustav* of organisational forms. Mark Natanson favoured freedom of action for local groups, and at first *Zemlya i volya* was loose and flexible.<sup>66</sup> Vera Figner writes that the organisation was not federalist, but centralism was as yet weak.<sup>67</sup> Individuals were free to choose the activities they took up. According to Yurii Bogdanovich, the society was federalist; local groups acted independently of St. Petersburg and were allowed to work out their own constitution and structure.<sup>68</sup> *Zemlya i volya* perhaps had its centre in St. Petersburg, but the communes in the provinces were autonomous, recruiting their own members from among workers and students not as members of *Zemlya i volya* as a national society but as members of the local group.<sup>69</sup>

Thus at this stage it cannot be said that we are dealing with "a revolutionary party as the term came to be understood in subsequent decades" as Venturi writes, by which he means a strong organisation of

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<sup>64</sup> Hardy *Land* p.48

<sup>65</sup> O.V. Aptekman *Obshchestvo "Zemlya i volya" 70kh godov* Petrograd 1924 p.180

<sup>66</sup> Hardy *Land* p.51

<sup>67</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.143

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Hardy *Land* p.52

<sup>69</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.176

professional revolutionaries;<sup>70</sup> this would only be achieved by Aleksandr Mikhailov's reorganisation of the group in 1878, which introduced an *ustav* to which obedience was compulsory, and a strong element of centralism. Given that various groups of revolutionaries united around a programme, but not an *ustav* which bound them to a centralised organisational structure, it is fair to say that like the Chaikovskii circle, the early *Zemlya i volya* was united not by a strong organisation but by ideas and outlook, albeit more specific than their forebears.

Indeed Vera Figner's circle retained another similarity with the *Chaikovtsy* which prevented it from fully amalgamating with Natanson's group and becoming known as the "separatists". This was their criteria for membership; Figner's circle wanted to base membership on mutual trust and personal knowledge, as the *Chaikovtsy* had done; Natanson on the other hand felt that this would unnecessarily restrict the size of the organisation and wanted a more "businesslike" approach, in accepting anyone who had proved their usefulness to the cause and honesty.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to say whether this is the cause or the effect of Figner's group consisting largely of former *Chaikovtsy* and Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionaries like Yurii Bogdanovich, Mariya Subbotina and Aleksandra Kornilova, while Natanson's seems to have attracted new members such as Plekhanov and Aleksandr Mikhailov.

### 3-4: Activity and Constituency

Although they remained formally separate, both Natanson's and Figner's circle agreed on the new programme, which stated that the main activities of the revolutionaries were: to create a strong organisation to act on the programme; to try to form links with the sects; to create settlements in areas where peasant discontent was strongest; to draw in bandit gangs to the cause; and to build links with centres of industrial workers.<sup>72</sup> Broadly speaking then, the constituency as set out in the programme was very wide-ranging. Although in practice it does not seem as if *Zemlya i volya* contacted

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<sup>70</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.558

<sup>71</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.143

<sup>72</sup> Volk *Revolutsionnoe* v.2 p.29

any *razboiniki*, they did look to both workers and peasants. However, while earlier revolutionaries had placed more hopes on the *fabrichnye* workers, the programme of *Zemlya i volya* specifically states that relations are to be built with *fabrichnye* and *zavodskie*.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, it also calls for propaganda and agitation in the university centres among the intelligentsia, who will be the first contingent to fill the ranks of the organisation. Both of these points are in some contrast not only to earlier Russian groups but also to anarchists in Europe who looked specifically to poor workers and peasants and disdained somewhat the better-off skilled workers. The point about intelligently being the main contingent to fill the ranks of the organisation also suggest a degree of separation between intelligentsia revolutionaries and the *narod*; again, both anarchists and earlier Russian populists had espoused the idea of the revolutionaries breaking fully with their own class and joining the people, living their life and sharing their struggles, and by extension, hoped that workers and peasants would come to make up the bulk of their organisations. Finally, the programme advocated the exploitation of liberals for the purposes of the revolution,<sup>74</sup> echoing Nechaev's *Catechism* of 1869, which apparently was a favourite of Aleksandr Mikhailov.<sup>75</sup>

In practice the main activities of Figner's and Natanson's groups were among the peasants; both groups set off for the provinces early in 1877. The separatists made for Samara province; Vera Figner waited in St. Petersburg until a *fel'dsher's* place could be found for her.<sup>76</sup> The revolutionary scene was beginning to become more lively in the capital at this point; Kropotkin's escape from prison, the demonstration on Kazan' square at which a red banner proclaiming "Land and Freedom" was unfurled, followed by the trials of those involved in the demonstration, the trial of the 50 of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation, and of Evgenii Zaslavskii, and finally

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<sup>73</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.29

<sup>74</sup> Volk *Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.30

<sup>75</sup> Hardy *Land* p.80

<sup>76</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi* p.147

numerous early releases from the trial of the 193 all enlivened the capital and brought new members into the organisation.<sup>77</sup>

A place was eventually found for Figner in August 1877 as a *fel'dsher*, however the work was so demanding and the filthy conditions so demoralising that she conducted no propaganda before danger of arrest forced her to leave.<sup>78</sup> In 1878, she and her comrades joined up with Natanson's group, who had gone to Saratov. (Natanson himself had been arrested by this time.) Here, Ol'ga Natanson, Aleksandr Mikhailov, Georgii Plekhanov and others had formed a "settlement", and contacted local groups, with some intending to go out to the villages, others to remain in town. Figner and her sister Evgeniya found jobs as *fel'dsher* and teacher respectively in Petrovskii uezd, where they quickly became the centre of village life, and Figner's memoir describes how useful and needed the sisters felt there; they had opportunity to talk with the peasants about their lives, relations to their landlords and the authorities, reforms (if not revolution), while the peasants for their part asked them to write for them, to appeal to the local court on their behalf and so on.<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile Ivanchin-Pisarev and Bogdanovich had gone to Strakhov uezd where they aimed to revive the prestige of the commune. Working as scribes, they fought against the corruption of local officials. Like Figner they were forced to move on after being compromised, and also went to Saratov province. Here, Ivanchin-Pisarev led crusades on issues like debts, insurance, corruption and illegal trading, and came to be held in high esteem by the local peasants.<sup>80</sup> He succeeded in increasing numbers at commune meetings and revived interest in it as an institution.

In Rostov, an affiliated group succeeded in infiltrating the local zemstvo, as well as the administration of a *zavod* and that of the railway. They also had connections inside a bank, library and tobacco *fabrika*.<sup>81</sup> They began activity among the workers of the town, and set up a shoemaking

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<sup>77</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* v.I p.131

<sup>78</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* pp.154-5

<sup>79</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* pp.161-4

<sup>80</sup> Hardy *Land* p.37



workshop, around which a workers' circle coalesced. The group had connections among the miners, and using the zemstvo to find places for teachers and *fel'dshers*, set about spreading propaganda among the villages and the Cossacks. They were forced to leave Rostov in late 1877 after being warned that arrests were imminent. The traitor who had given them away was killed by a fellow worker.<sup>82</sup>

Apart from Samara, Saratov and Rostov, *Zemlya i volya* had centres in Tsaritsyn, Astrakhan, the Urals, the Kuban and the south-eastern provinces. Saratov was the largest however and acted as the provincial headquarters.<sup>83</sup> Even after this centre was broken up late in 1877, enough colonies remained in the province for propaganda too continue. However, due to the long separation from St. Petersburg, Aleksandr Mikhailov had to fight to retain Saratov's affiliation to the centre.<sup>84</sup> This may have had two causes: firstly, the weak centralism of the organisation and the autonomy of local groups, which we have already noted, and secondly the fact that at the same time as provincial centres were becoming increasingly dependent on St. Petersburg for money and activists, those in the capital were becoming increasingly engaged in the local movement there and the struggle against police and spies, ignoring their provincial friends.<sup>85</sup> From 1878, divisions began to appear in *Zemlya i volya* between those in the urban centres and the "colonists", particularly over tactics and political versus social revolution which were to result in the organisation's split.

However, while their rural cousins concentrated on the peasants, those in St. Petersburg were attempting to organise workers. In Spring 1878, a strike broke out at the Thornton factory. The strike was called by the workers, but the revolutionaries, true to their programme, took the opportunity to agitate. Attending a strike meeting they explained to the workers that strikes were illegal in Russia, but only by standing together

<sup>81</sup> Popov *Zapiski* p.154

<sup>82</sup> Popov *Zapiski* pp.154-8. It is not clear from Popov's account whether the traitor deliberately gave information or broke under police questioning.

<sup>83</sup> "Aleksandr Dmitrievich Mikhailov: avtobiograficheskie zametki" in *Byloe* no.2 1906 p.165

<sup>84</sup> "Aleksandr Dmitrievich Mikhailov" p.165

<sup>85</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.177

could the workers fight the capitalists. Plekhanov persuaded the workers that they had to stop the bosses looking on them as serfs, and offered to make sure the strike was reported in the press.<sup>86</sup> The question of whether to get involved in the strike had been problematic for the revolutionaries; as we have seen, earlier groups had been cool towards strikes; this was the first time the *zemlevol'tsy* had been confronted with independent workers' protest. Plekhanov wanted to take the protest to the streets, in the form of a procession to petition the heir to the throne; Popov disagreed, wanting to use the occasion to strengthen relations with the workers more generally.<sup>87</sup> In the event, the workers were impressed by the fact that their strike was reported in the papers, and by the funds which the revolutionaries raised from students and liberals. Important to the revolutionaries was the opening of a bridge to the workers of the capital. Popov claims, like many of the *Chaikovtsy* before him, that the *fabrichnye* workers were more sympathetic to the revolutionaries, and were a better protesting element. He also notes their *zemlyachestvo* which gave them more coherence than the *zavodskie*.<sup>88</sup> While this is of course hardly conclusive evidence, it does at least show that for some within *Zemlya i volya* a preference for the *fabrichnye* still existed; it may be significant that Popov was a convinced *narodnik* and remained so after *Zemlya i volya* split, and as such he may have been more eager to act on those workers who retained links with the peasants. It may also have been the case that the rift between students and *zavodskie* workers earlier in the decade (see chapter 2) had still not healed and that the *zavodskie* were more reticent in their dealings with the revolutionaries. G. Golosov notes renewed friction between the two groups as being part of the impetus for the formation at the end of the decade of the North Russian Workers' Union independently of the intelligentsia.<sup>89</sup>

However, at the end of 1877, after an explosion in a munitions factory in St. Petersburg had killed nine workers, a large demonstration took place

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<sup>86</sup> Popov *Zapiski* p.170

<sup>87</sup> Popov *Zapiski* p.171

<sup>88</sup> Popov *Zapiski* p.188

at the burial in the Smolensk cemetery which included a revolutionary workers' circle, some members of *Zemlya i volya* and around two thousand workers.<sup>90</sup> *Zemlya i volya* issued a proclamation to the workers accusing the management of murder and connecting the deaths with the economic position of the workers more generally. When the demonstration took place, some of the *zemlevoľ'tsy* went armed; however, many of the workers turned out in their Sunday best, which the revolutionaries considered a "bourgeois affectation".<sup>91</sup> The burial went peacefully until unexpectedly an unknown worker made an angry speech condemning the factory owners. When he was arrested, the crowd reacted angrily, shouting, attacking the police and eventually freeing their comrade.<sup>92</sup> This event is indicative of two things: firstly, the revolutionaries' continuing distance from the *zavodskie* workers and second, their desire to build relations with them.

A few months later, in March 1878, *Zemlya i volya* issued a proclamation in connection with a strike at the New Paper Mill, apparently written by Plekhanov.<sup>93</sup> The strike, of course, was in a *fabrika*, and the proclamation refers to need forcing the peasants into the factories. The main thrust, however, is the call for workers to stand together and help each other resist the bosses. The bosses, writes Plekhanov, are happy that the workers are not united; when strikers at one factory are joined by other factories however, the workers need fear neither the bosses nor the police. Finally the proclamation calls for a strike fund to help the paper mill workers, telling other workers that if they help them today, that help will be returned when their turn comes to call a strike.

Police files from 1878 and 1879 reveal propaganda taking place in both *fabriki* and *zavody* in St. Petersburg. One worker, known as Vanyushka, propagandised at both the New Paper Mill and the

<sup>89</sup> G. Golosov "K biografii odnogo iz osnovatelei 'Severno-Russkogo rabocheho soyuza'" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.6 1924 p.54

<sup>90</sup> "V 70e i 80e gody na trubochnom zavode" in *Krasnaya letopis'* no.2 1928 p.197

<sup>91</sup> "V 70e i 80e gody" p.203

<sup>92</sup> "V 70e i 80e gody" p.204

<sup>93</sup> Volk *Revolutsionnoe* v.2 pp.52-53

*Mekhanicheskii zavod* in 1878;<sup>94</sup> and in 1879, it was reported that agitation was under way in "all *fabriki* and *zavody*" in the Nevskaya zastava region of the city, which was characterised as "very dangerous". A number of former students working at the Putilov metalworks were arrested,<sup>95</sup> and agitation for an armed rising was reported to have taken place at the Baltic Shipbuilding Plant.<sup>96</sup>

An article in the journal *Zemlya i volya* in February 1879 called for more attention to be paid to workers following the strikes and protests of the previous year.<sup>97</sup> Not enough attention had been paid, according to the article, to the relative isolation of worker-socialists from their colleagues, due to the emphasis on propaganda, education and development of worker-socialists, rather than getting involved in day-to-day worker issues.<sup>98</sup> This is a reflection of the *narodnik* position on relations with the peasants; not presenting them with abstract theories but getting involved in issues close to their lives. While not representing a turn away from the peasants in favour of workers in terms of constituency, this does display a shift in attitude towards the workers; a more positive attitude to strikes (bearing in mind the more negative attitude of the *Chaikovtsy*), and an acceptance of urban action by workers rather than seeing them as recruits to take the revolutionary message to the countryside.

#### **4: Terrorism and Political Struggle**

##### **4-1: Armed Resistance and the Executive Committee**

It appears that the impetus for both terrorism as a revolutionary tactic and political change as an end came from the south of the Russian empire and at least in part from revolutionaries who were not formally members of *Zemlya i volya*. Certainly the propensity for violence was greater there from an earlier stage; the *buntari*, as we have seen, were constantly armed, and groups such as Ivan Koval'skii's in Odessa had proclaimed their determination not to be "taken like sheep" when attempts were made to

<sup>94</sup> GARF Fond 109 III ekspeditsiya opis' 163 ed. khr. 349 l.16

<sup>95</sup> GARF Fond 109 III ekspeditsiya opis' 164 ed. khr. 180 chast' 1 l.6

<sup>96</sup> GARF Fond 109 III ekspeditsiya opis' 164 ed. khr. 180 chast' 1 l.46

<sup>97</sup> B. Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika 70kh godov* Paris 1905 pp.323-333

arrest them.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the use of violence to bring about political revolution, as opposed to social and economic, which heretofore had been the focus of most revolutionaries including those of *Zemlya i volya*, also appears to have originated in the south and been taken up by a minority faction within *Zemlya i volya*.

As far as I am aware, with the exception of the Nechaev case, the first police spy to be killed by revolutionaries was he who betrayed Evgenii Zaslavskii's Southern Union in Odessa, referred to in the previous chapter. Probably the most notorious case was the bungled attempt in 1876 by the *buntari* to kill Gorinovich, who was summoned to Odessa by the revolutionaries and beaten, apparently to death. Acid was poured onto his face to obscure his identity. However Gorinovich survived, and was made an example of in the trial of the 193 in 1877, and also disrupted the work of the *buntari* in the south.<sup>100</sup> In spite of the fact that Stefanovich's Chigirin conspiracy was still functioning at this point, according to Debagorii-Mokrievich's memoir, most of the southern revolutionaries were by now cool towards the idea of agitation in the villages and were beginning to focus on activity in town.<sup>101</sup> However it should be pointed out that one of those involved in the attempt to kill Gorinovich - Lev Deich - was also closely involved in the Chigirin conspiracy. Therefore the link between such "defensive" violence and a shift in focus to political change is not clear-cut, since Chigirin was obviously an attempt at social revolution based in the peasants. This division between defensive violence and political terrorism will become clearer when the discussion returns to *Zemlya i volya*.

According to Mikhail Frolenko, the idea of attacking government agents had been around in Odessa and Kiev for some time by this stage. However as early as Easter 1877, radicals in the south were debating a more systematic attack, and while the majority proposed "destroying the woods so the wolves would die out", a minority was in favour of a direct

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<sup>98</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.325

<sup>99</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.598

<sup>100</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.282

<sup>101</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.285

attack on the "wolves" themselves.<sup>102</sup> This obviously implies political terror, and represents a qualitative difference from defence against spies, as in the Gorinovich affair, and the allowance for "disorganisation" in the programme of *Zemlya i volya*.

This terrorist minority in the south was joined by Valerian Osinskii, who, although he was a *zemlevolets*, quickly caught onto the new mood in the south and took it further.<sup>103</sup> He became involved with a circle which included Grigorii Popko, Mariya Kovalevskaya, the former *buntar'* Debagorii-Mokrievich, and Ivan Koval'skii. By late 1877 he was a convinced terrorist.<sup>104</sup> Despite his formal affiliation to *Zemlya i volya*, Osinskii began to operate more or less as a free agent.<sup>105</sup> It was his idea to create the Executive Committee, dedicated to using terrorism to clear the way for revolutionary propaganda.<sup>106</sup> Henceforth, all proclamations on terrorist acts carried the seal of this committee, which did not in fact exist as a formal body beyond a number of people willing to carry out such acts.<sup>107</sup> It was not a part of *Zemlya i volya*, and its proclamations were printed on a secret press which also was not owned by *Zemlya i volya*.<sup>108</sup>

Added impetus was given to the terrorist idea by Vera Zasulich's shot at the governor of St. Petersburg, General Trepov. I do not intend to go over the details of this event as they are covered in all the literature on populism.<sup>109</sup> It is important to note, however, firstly that Zasulich did not intend to inspire the terrorist wave and regretted the consequences of her action;<sup>110</sup> secondly that Osinskii's terrorists had also organised an attempt on Trepov, so it was not Zasulich's inspiration which encouraged them; and thirdly that Zasulich was not a member of *Zemlya i volya* at the time. The

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<sup>102</sup> M. Frolenko "Kommentarii k stat'e N.A. Morozova 'Vozniknovenie Narodnoi voli'" in *Byloe* no.12 1906 p.23

<sup>103</sup> M. Frolenko *Sobranie* p.191

<sup>104</sup> S. Lion "Ot propagandy k terroru" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.6 1924 p.13

<sup>105</sup> S.S. Volk *Narodnaya volya* Moscow/Leningrad 1966 p.70

<sup>106</sup> Volk *Narodnaya volya* p.14

<sup>107</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.191

<sup>108</sup> D.W. Hay *The Development of the Revolutionary Movement in the South of the Russian Empire 1873-1883* PhD thesis, University of Glasgow 1983 p.59

<sup>109</sup> See, eg., Venturi *Roots* pp. 596-7

<sup>110</sup> Hardy *Land* p.62

different responses of *Zemlya i volya* in St. Petersburg and Koval'skii's group in Odessa to Zasulich's shot are interesting; while the former, written by Dmitrii Klements, praises her defence of human rights and her demonstration that tyranny is not almighty, the latter hopes for Trepov's death as one of the main pillars of the government, and claims that the event shows that the revolutionaries had gone to war with the government.<sup>111</sup> Aside from the more violent tone of the Odessa proclamation, it is also concerned to link Zasulich's attempt with a political struggle.

Aside from the effect of acts such as Zasulich's, Koval'skii's armed resistance to arrest and the violent demonstration which greeted the pronouncement of his death sentence, and the killing of baron Geiking, chief of the Kiev police, in May 1878, one of the chief events which helped to import the new methods of struggle into *Zemlya i volya* was a joint attempt to free Porfirii Voinaral'skii from a prison transport in Khar'kov. Many from the north came down to Khar'kov to take part in the attempt, which in the event failed. However, Frolenko cites this event as the beginning of what was to become *Narodnaya volya*, when the north and south began to work together.<sup>112</sup> From 1878, some *zemlevol'tsy* began to raise the idea of a political struggle against the government. Nevertheless, when Osinskii pressed the terrorist case and some of the *buntari* urged a strengthening of the "disorganising" element in *Zemlya i volya*'s constitution, they were rebuffed with a warning against terrorism; the majority of *Zemlya i volya* remained true to the "*narodnik*" purpose of the organisation.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4-2: The Reorganisation of *Zemlya i volya*

In spite of the opposition to terror and continuing support for activity among the peasants, *Zemlya i volya* underwent a major reorganisation in April or May 1878. Credit for the reorganisation of the group goes largely to Aleksandr Mikhailov. Mikhailov had always been in favour of some centralisation and co-ordination of revolutionary activity.<sup>114</sup> Now, as he

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<sup>111</sup> Volk *Revol'yutsionnoe* v.2 pp.47-50 (*Zemlya i volya*), pp.50-52 (Koval'skii)

<sup>112</sup> Frolenko *Sobranie* p.192

<sup>113</sup> Hardy *Land* p.64

<sup>114</sup> "Aleksandr Dmitrievich Mikhailov" p.164

reorganised the forces of *Zemlya i volya*, he insisted on it. He constantly harried members to be careful, to protect the secret flats where they met, not to endanger the organisation in any way. He created a veritable "science of conspiracy".<sup>115</sup> The new organisation was more suited to urban activity and terrorism.<sup>116</sup> Mikhailov called for, and won, discipline, centralism, majority rulings, obedience, and central direction of provincial activities. The programme was reviewed and remained basically unchanged, apart from the perhaps significant additions to the tasks of the party of "the strengthening of dissatisfaction by agitation" and the "sharpening of discontent".<sup>117</sup> However, an *ustav* was now drawn up which outlined a tightly-knit conspiratorial society. This would consist of a basic group of the central members of *Zemlya i volya*, linked to specialist and territorial groups. Although these groups would enjoy autonomy in their internal and local affairs, their activities would be directed by the centre and aimed at fulfilling particular parts of the general programme of the society. Members of the basic group who set up a provincial group were to keep their membership of the former secret from their new comrades. The *ustav* called for control over all groups and members by the centre.<sup>118</sup> Despite the fact that terrorism was still not approved by *Zemlya i volya*, the new form of organisation was clearly more suited to urban terror than rural propaganda.

#### 4-3: Terror: Defence or Attack?

It seems likely that during 1878 differing interpretations were being put on terrorism within *Zemlya i volya*, parallel to the differing views of anarchists in the West on the attacks on royalty during the same year, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Some, including some of those who carried out terrorist attacks like Vera Zasulich and Sergei Kravchinskii, saw them as necessary means of defending the party against *proizvol*. Kravchinskii's pamphlet on his killing of Mezentssev, entitled "A Death for a Death" in view of the proximity of the killing to the execution of Koval'skii,

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<sup>115</sup> "Aleksandr Dmitrievich Mikhailov" pp.168-9

<sup>116</sup> Frolenko "Kommentarii" p.25

<sup>117</sup> Valk *Revolutsionnoe* p.32

<sup>118</sup> Valk *Revolutsionnoe* pp.34-42



claimed that in terms of the revolution, only a class could attack a class, and assassinations like Mezentzev's were merely defensive.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, such attacks inspired more political terrorists, as urban revolutionaries faced a new police offensive. The protests of the propagandists went unheard; as urban violence grew, the police were granted increased powers, and penalties and executions also increased. Division between urban terrorists and rural propagandists began to grow, since any propagandists who kept in contact with urban centres were bound to be exposed. Increasingly the use of violence came to be alienated from its original intention in the programme of *Zemlya i volya*, i.e. defensive, with a decisive blow to be struck at the centre of government at the time of the popular insurrection. The differences were clarified in the wake of a wave of arrests in September 1878 which severely damaged *Zemlya i volya*. Aleksandr Mikhailov immediately called for remaining *zemlevol'tsy* to return to St. Petersburg, and for the formation of a terrorist combat centre. He decided that the party did not possess enough forces for agitation and must concentrate on terror.<sup>120</sup>

Other views were expressed in the journal *Zemlya i volya!*, the first issue of which appeared in October 1878. The leader in the first issue, written by Dmitrii Klements, claimed that the party was opposed to a struggle for political freedoms and despised liberals and constitutionalists.<sup>121</sup> Another article in the same edition stated the case for defensive terror; as soon as the arbitrary actions of individuals against the party ceased, retaliation against individuals would cease in turn. Terror, it claimed, had nothing in common with the fight against the foundation of the current order, and the bulk of revolutionary work must be in the *narod*.<sup>122</sup> Throwing all their forces into a fight with the government would be a distraction from the main goal, and furthermore, a victory resulting in a constitutional order would allow the bourgeoisie to organise and attack the socialists. While hurling all their

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<sup>119</sup> Hardy *Land* p.71

<sup>120</sup> Hardy *Land* p.85

<sup>121</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.118

<sup>122</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.124.

forces against the government might hasten its collapse, lack of roots in the *narod* would prevent the socialists from benefiting from this.<sup>123</sup>

This position was elaborated in the second edition, in a leading article comparing the killings in Russia to the assassination attempts in the West. Whereas those in the West had been carried out by desperate individuals, responsibility for the Russian assassinations and attempts was accepted by the social-revolutionary party. The tactic was to "hit those who hit us", i.e. those who are dangerous to the party, and only because they are dangerous. No class or political motive should be assigned to the killings, they were entirely to defend the party.<sup>124</sup> The European would-be assassins, Moncasi, Hoedal and Nobiling are described as portents of the coming revolutionary storm, symbolic of the sharpening hatred of the masses for the authorities.<sup>125</sup>

Other currents began to make their voices heard, however. From early 1879, the terrorist faction of *Zemlya i volya*, frustrated at their inability to have their views published in the official organ, began a "Listok Zemli i voli", which concentrated on terrorist actions and "disorganisation". Each Listok opened with a warning to a spy. The second of these Listki, from April 1879, called for systematic political murder. Not only was this a means of defence, it also provided the means for avenging those executed by the government, and was one of the best means of agitation.<sup>126</sup> A secret society carrying out political murders was described as the bringing to life of the revolution in the present. Against such a form of struggle, great armies are powerless; the effectiveness of political murder is shown by the government's response with martial law, increasing numbers of gendarmes and Cossacks on the streets; clearly the government fears for its existence. Furthermore, the martyrs executed for political murders are described as

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<sup>123</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.125

<sup>124</sup> *Zemlya i volya!* no.2 December 1878 pp.1-2

<sup>125</sup> *Zemlya i volya!* no.2 p.4. This assessment is similar to Kropotkin's in *Le Révolté*, to be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>126</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.498

"truly free people amongst millions of slaves" and necessary to the cause. The future is the time for mass movements.<sup>127</sup>

This clearly represents a call for political revolution by means of systematic terrorism. Yet the fact that the terrorists had to produce their own separate organ for their views indicates that the debate over political/social revolution, as well as tactics, was far from over. Indeed, according to Frolenko, who joined the terrorist fraction, the *narodniki* had still not lost faith in their "settlements" and feared the damage that a terrorist campaign could do to them.<sup>128</sup> While those in St. Petersburg, occupied in the war with the government, looked incredulously at what they saw as the silence in the provinces, those active in the villages blamed the terrorists and their "fireworks" for distracting people from the real task within the *narod*.<sup>129</sup> However, the debate was fierce within the St. Petersburg group as well; encouraged by Osinskii and the southerners, *zemlevol'tsy* in the capital like Nikolai Morozov, Kvyatkovskii, Barannikov, Lev Tikhomirov, Aron Zundeleovich and Mariya Oshanina were groping for a new direction and recognised the need to win political freedom by an active struggle against the government.<sup>130</sup> As Figner puts it, the idea of the "blow at the centre", which formerly was dependent upon the actions of the masses, now came to take first place for this group. However opposition to this view was led in St. Petersburg by Plekhanov and Mikhail Popov. They claimed that the numbers of personnel lost to arrests after every terrorist attack was too dear a price to pay; terror dragged comrades onto a one-sided, purely political path of action, and had a harmful influence on the youth, distracting them from work among the peasants which was the basic work of the party.<sup>131</sup>

What then was the cause of this turn by some of the party to a political struggle? It has been ascribed by Venturi to the failures of propaganda among the peasants in the colonies, as well as government

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<sup>127</sup> Bazilevskii *Revolutsionnaya zhurnalistika* p.499

<sup>128</sup> Frolenko "Kommentarii" p.25

<sup>129</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi* p.177

<sup>130</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi* p.179

<sup>131</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi* p.179

persecution making propaganda work impossible.<sup>132</sup> This view is backed up by some of the memoirs, for example Vera Figner's, which claims that the cause among the *narod* was lost by 1879, and that this was due to the lack of political freedom.<sup>133</sup> However, as Deborah Hardy points out, other memoirs indicate the extreme reluctance of the propagandists to leave their colonies, and that terror did not come from disheartened "villagers" but grew up separately in the cities.<sup>134</sup> The fact that this is backed up by Frolenko, a member of the terrorist fraction, strengthens the case against the failure of the colonies and of propaganda. We have noted some of the articles in "*Zemlya i volya*" which continue to emphasise the cause among the peasants and social revolution over political as late as 1879. Aptekman's memoir claims that where a settlement existed for a year, the revolutionary gained the respect, love and trust of the peasants. They did not expect immediate results but were prepared for slow, drop-by-drop work.<sup>135</sup> Mikhail Popov's account tells of peasants preventing the arrest of a propagandist, Mozgovoi, and claims that it was not hard to gain the sympathy of the peasants to the extent that propaganda could be openly conducted among them.<sup>136</sup> Thus Hardy would appear to be correct in questioning the attribution of the rise of terrorism in *Zemlya i volya* to the failure of work among the peasants. However, in my view her account places too much emphasis on what she calls the "mystique of terrorism",<sup>137</sup> the impact of the fearless deeds of the urban revolutionaries, and the emotional need for more dynamic activity than was available in the rural colonies, in attracting others to political terror (although there was doubtless an element of this). This effectively reduces the debate between political and social revolution to an issue of temperament. Furthermore, Hardy does not pay enough attention, in my view, to the politicising influences of the Balkan war and the rise of constitutionalism in the south.

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<sup>132</sup> Venturi *Roots* pp.579-80, 584

<sup>133</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.171

<sup>134</sup> Hardy *Land* p.xii

<sup>135</sup> Aptekman *Obshchestvo* p.345

<sup>136</sup> M.R. Popov "*Zemlya i volya* nakanune voronezhskogo s"ezda" in *Byloe* no.8 1906 pp.25-27

<sup>137</sup> Hardy *Land* p.79

#### 4-4: Constitutionalism

We have noted that the impulse for terrorism and political struggle came primarily from the southern towns of Kiev and Odessa, in particular from circles close to Valerian Osinskii. The necessity of a constitution was talked about everywhere in Kiev, even in the *zemstva*, according to Debagorii-Mokrievich.<sup>138</sup> Calls for political freedoms became louder among southern revolutionaries during 1877, and in that year a constitutional circle grew up in Kiev, consisting partly of students and partly revolutionaries.<sup>139</sup> Osinskii met with this circle, and was quickly converted to the idea of political freedom. The best way of doing this, in his view, was to terrorise the government.<sup>140</sup> He completely abandoned the idea of working among the *narod* and decided to direct all his forces to terrorism. At the time, this was to think the unthinkable. Serious disagreements arose out of this between Osinskii and his colleagues in St. Petersburg.<sup>141</sup> Aware of their relatively small numbers, Osinskii's circle actively sought support from liberals among the bourgeoisie, landowners and the bureaucracy. Liberals and revolutionaries mixed at the house of Sof'ya Rubinshtein.<sup>142</sup>

Constitutionalism and the idea of a fight for political freedoms were boosted by the war in the Balkans. According to Debagorii-Mokrievich, the war, in particular the failures of Russian troops, and rumours of corruption at the highest levels, opened the eyes of many.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, the southern towns were particularly affected by the return of sick and wounded troops. Debagorii describes long rows of goods wagons on the railway from which stared the pale faces of soldiers. Rows of barracks were constructed in Odessa in an unsuccessful attempt to house the sick and wounded. Many came to feel that the war would have gone better if the thieves and

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<sup>138</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.308

<sup>139</sup> Volk *Narodnaya volya* pp.67-8

<sup>140</sup> Volk *Narodnaya volya* p.168

<sup>141</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.322-3

<sup>142</sup> Lion "Ot propagandy" pp.14-15

<sup>143</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.306-7

adventurists in the government had been controlled in some way by society.<sup>144</sup>

However, it seems to me that the idea of political revolution as opposed to social and economic was given a particular boost both inside and outside of *Zemlya i volya* by Russia's liberation of Bulgaria from Turkish rule and the granting there of a constitution. Many could not fail to see the contradiction between Russia's internal policy of repression and her foreign policy of a war to liberate Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke.<sup>145</sup> Evidence of the influence of the war and the liberation of Bulgaria can be found in the underground press. In April 1878, a proclamation was issued by the illegal journal *Nachalo*, which was produced on the *zemlevol'tsy*'s press in conjunction with some members of *Zemlya i volya*. This connected Vera Zasulich's gunshot with events in the Balkans, claiming that she could not bear to see Russia parading as the saviour of Bulgaria, while Trepov was freely allowed to carry out "Turkish" punishments.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile the legal press, the authors claimed, praised the liberation of the Slavs but remained silent about the slavery within Russia. The leaflet claimed that government was ceasing to function effectively; it was unable to control the violence of its officials, so this was being combated by private individuals; it could not deal with unrest, so the likes of the Okhotnyi ryad butchers were called in to break up demonstrations.<sup>147</sup> The situation must be resolved by raising the idea of control of social affairs by society into a principle, i.e. a constitution or *zemskii sobor*. *Zemlya i volya* themselves echoed the accusation of hypocrisy in an appeal to the army; did you go to the Balkans and liberate the Bulgars, so as to shoot and beat the inhabitants of your homeland? they asked.<sup>148</sup> On the subject of the violent repression of student unrest, a further proclamation asked "are the students Bulgarians among Turks?" and

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<sup>144</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.308, 316

<sup>145</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* p.315; "Iz zapiski D.T.Butsynskogo" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* p.131

<sup>146</sup> "Letuchii listok no.1" in *Byloe* no.3 1903 p.153

<sup>147</sup> "Letuchii listok no.1" pp.153-4. The reference is to a student demonstration in Moscow to show solidarity with Kiev students in a prison transport. Police used local butchers and shopkeepers to break up the demonstration by violence.

<sup>148</sup> "Ko vsemu, komu vedat' nadlezhit" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.72

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<sup>144</sup> Debagorii-Mokrievich *Vospominaniya* pp.308, 316

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<sup>148</sup> "Ko vsemu, komu vedat' nadlezhit" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.72

accused the police of using the force of "bashi-bouzouks" against unarmed people.<sup>149</sup>

As we have seen, towards the end of the 1870s, the idea of political freedom in the shape of a constitution was gathering force. In revolutionary circles, it came primarily from the south of the country, and began to express itself in the attacks on officials carried out by Osinskii's Executive Committee. The poor conduct of the Balkan war and the hypocrisy of granting political freedom to Bulgaria whilst ruthlessly pursuing dissent within Russia encouraged the trend. However both the idea and the tactics began to find acceptance in the north also; some decided that political freedom was necessary in order for socialists to be able to propagandise, while others, like Nikolai Morozov, saw inspirational value in the heroic deeds of a terrorist minority. Organisational forms were adopted which harmonised with a campaign of clandestine political activity and terrorism. However it should not be forgotten that this tendency did not take over from the tendency which favoured federalism, activity in the *narod* and social revolution; in fact it remained in the minority until the organisation split in 1879. Settlements continued to operate in the provinces; they were often broken up by the actions of the terrorists, or, as in the case of Mikhail Popov and Kvyatkovskii in 1878, by revolutionaries being summoned back to the capital to rebuild the central group which had been disrupted by arrests.<sup>150</sup> For a time these opposing views were contained within the organisation, but the issue of regicide, perhaps the logical conclusion to a campaign of political terror, brought differences to a head.

#### 4-5: The Division of *Zemlya i volya*

The regicide attempt by Aleksandr Solov'ev in April 1879 brought to a head the schism developing within *Zemlya i volya*. Solov'ev met secretly with members of the "political" faction Aleksandr Mikhailov, Aron Zundeleovich and Aleksandr Kvyatkovskii and discussed the plan.<sup>151</sup> When Mikhailov put it to *Zemlya i volya*, the majority were horrified. At a stormy meeting, Mikhail

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<sup>149</sup> "K obshchestvu" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.74

<sup>150</sup> Popov "*Zemlya i volya*" p.19

<sup>151</sup> Hardy *Land* p.91



Popov said that if another Karakozov were to appear, another Komissarov could appear also;<sup>152</sup> his friend Kvyatkovskii replied that if Popov were such a Komissarov, he would shoot him himself.<sup>153</sup> The *narodnik* faction felt that a regicide attempt would put an end to the propaganda campaign and thus their efforts to foment a social revolution because of the government retaliations which would follow.<sup>154</sup> While Mikhailov called for assistance to be provided in the form of a horse and driver for Solov'ev to escape after his attempt, some *narodniki* called for Solov'ev to be removed from St. Petersburg by force.<sup>155</sup> In the end, a compromise was reached; *Zemlya i volya* would not help Solov'ev, although individual members were free to act on their own initiative. Many revolutionaries left St. Petersburg and the journal "*Zemlya i volya*" was closed. Since, as we have seen, the journal had stuck mostly to the social-revolutionary line, forcing the politicals to produce the "*Listok*", its closure was a blow to the *narodniki*. Furthermore, when the attempt took place, and failed, the self-fulfilling argument of the political wing duly fulfilled itself; that is to say, the case that work among the *narod* was impossible until political freedoms had been gained was encouraged by the reaction brought on by the regicide attempt. In the ensuing arguments over whether *Zemlya i volya* should return to social activity among the peasants or carry Solov'ev's cause to its conclusion, those who had supported Solov'ev continued to do so, since the reaction demanded it, while opponents pointed out that reaction was exactly what they had predicted, and that in any case the attempt had not been carried out in the name of the party.<sup>156</sup> The lines between social and political revolutionaries were drawn, and the necessity of a general meeting became clear.

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<sup>152</sup> Komissarov was the name of the peasant who supposedly knocked Karakozov's elbow and foiled his regicide attempt in 1866. According to Venturi, rumours were put about after the failed attempt that Karakozov had not aimed badly but had been jolted by a peasant; the tsar had been saved by a toiler from the fields. In fact Komissarov was a poor artisan given to drink. He was introduced to the tsar, ennobled and feted, but his behaviour was such that he had to be sent back to the provinces, where he died in a state of complete drunkenness. Venturi *Roots* p.348

<sup>153</sup> Popov "*Zemlya i volya*" p.21

<sup>154</sup> Hardy *Land* p.93

<sup>155</sup> N. Morozov "Vozniknovenie Narodnoi voli" in *Byloe* no.12 1906 p.6

<sup>156</sup> M Frolenko "Lipetskii i voronezhskii s"ezdy" in *Byloe* 1907 no.1 p.68

According to Nikolai Morozov, the politicals, as a minority faction, expected to be expelled from the party at the meeting. They therefore decided to organise in advance in preparation for this, by calling together the partisans of the new direction, from inside and outside of *Zemlya i volya*.<sup>157</sup> Frolenko, on the other hand, claims that they wanted to use the forthcoming meeting to gain freedom of action and independence for terrorism.<sup>158</sup> Either way, Frolenko was sent to invite potential supporters of political struggle to a secret meeting at Lipetsk in advance of the general meeting. He contacted Andrei Zhelyabov in Kiev, Mikhail Barannikov and Mar'ya Olovyanikova who were languishing in Orel province and only too keen to leave the countryside, and others in Odessa.<sup>159</sup> Eventually there were eleven people at the Lipetsk meeting. A new programme, written by Morozov, was discussed and accepted. This programme denied the possibility of work in the *narod*; instead its stated goal was to put an end to the current system of government by force of arms, and to fight for a system where political and social problems could be discussed in the press and at meetings, and could be decided by popular representatives.<sup>160</sup> The group also accepted the *ustav* of the Executive Committee, the name the group decided to take in the wake of the arrest of Osinskii and his Executive Committee in the south. This *ustav* placed the Executive Committee at the centre of revolutionary activity, and all affiliated groups were to recognise it as such. No affiliates must be allowed to become strong enough to undermine the authority of the Committee.<sup>161</sup> The main objective of the meeting was, according to Frolenko, to create a strong fighting organisation with the ability to act independently. This could not be done as a small group within *Zemlya i volya*; a large, well-organised party was necessary, able to act quickly and decisively, without waiting for permission. This necessitated centralism and hierarchy.<sup>162</sup> The Executive Committee then moved on to Voronezh, where the general

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<sup>157</sup> Morozov "Vozniknovenie" pp.9-10

<sup>158</sup> Frolenko "Lipetskii" p.68

<sup>159</sup> Frolenko "Lipetskii" pp.69-71

<sup>160</sup> Morozov "Vozniknovenie" p.11

<sup>161</sup> "Ustav Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 p.205

<sup>162</sup> Frolenko "Lipetskii" p.76

meeting was to take place. Meanwhile, unaware of the Lipetsk meeting, the leaders of the *narodnik* faction, Plekhanov and Popov, were gathering their own forces in preparation for the Voronezh meeting. Around twenty-five people attended, most with proxies from others in the provinces.

At Voronezh, the terrorists managed to have those members of the Executive Committee who were not members of *Zemlya i volya* (Frolenko, Zhelyabov, Kolodkevich, and Shiryayev) accepted, strengthening their hand. Furthermore, Plekhanov, the strongest opponent of terrorism, left the meeting after his opposition to Morozov's narrow conception of revolutionary activity was greeted with ambivalence. Some of the *narodniki* pointed out that *Zemlya i volya*'s programme had always allowed for violence; they were, of course, unaware of the programme and *ustav* of Lipetsk. Nevertheless, the "politicals" were surprised by their conciliatory tone.<sup>163</sup> The programme of *Zemlya i volya* remained virtually unchanged; however, more autonomy for political activity was achieved. In the end compromise was reached; it was decided that work in the *narod* would continue, alongside urban terrorism and regicide.<sup>164</sup>

In an attempt to retain unity, the *zemlevol'tsy* effectively accepted two different programmes at once; political revolution by a hierarchical and centralist party, and social revolution carried out by the peasants and workers, co-ordinated federally. Questions of principle and theory had unfortunately not been discussed in Voronezh, only the immediate practical question of what to do next.<sup>165</sup> The result was an unwieldy combination, and it did not last long. Soon after the return to St. Petersburg, disagreements broke out again; the terrorists complained that the *narodniki* were holding up their activity. Meanwhile the politicals were unpleasantly surprised when Zasulich returned to Russia and joined the *narodnik* faction; they had assumed she would take their side.<sup>166</sup> Krylova, who ran the press, refused to allow "political" articles to be printed, since political freedoms, she claimed,

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<sup>163</sup> Morozov "Vozniknovenie" p.17

<sup>164</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.186

<sup>165</sup> Frolenko "Lipetskii" p.84

<sup>166</sup> Morozov "Vozniknovenie" p.20

would benefit only the bourgeoisie.<sup>167</sup> Eventually a split became inevitable, and occurred in October 1879; within two weeks, the first issue of "*Narodnaya volya*" was ready, since the terrorists had already been organised for several months now. The majority *narodniki*, less prepared, put out the first issue of "*Chernyi peredel*" in January 1880.

## **5: Political Terror, Popular Propaganda, and Economic Terror**

### **5-1: *Narodnaya volya***

The basis of *Narodnaya volya*'s programme, according to Vera Figner, a member of the Executive Committee, was the influence of central state power on popular life.<sup>168</sup> The state had destroyed the federal basis of ancient Russia, tied the *narod* to the land and enslaved them; the state had created the nobility, first as state servants, then as free landowners, and created the basis for big property; and the state had freed the serfs only to itself become the biggest exploiter of free labour, giving the peasants poor land and burdening them with high dues and taxes.<sup>169</sup> In a leader article in their journal, *Narodnaya volya* claimed that the state was trying to create a bourgeoisie; conditions in the villages were deliberately made such that any man with talent and energy had no choice but to become a kulak; in industry, the state had for years been enslaving the population of the Urals to the capitalists, using the peasants' money to build the railways and to pay for speculation on the stock exchange, supporting industrialists and private capital with subsidies, trade tariffs and so on. "Here, the state is not a creation of the bourgeoisie, as in Europe, on the contrary the bourgeoisie is created by the state" the article ran.<sup>170</sup> No class was allowed any influence on the state in fact; the *narod* had no means to put their demands to government, the *zemstva* were entirely dependent on administrative authority, the press and writers had no freedom of expression, students were constantly watched by the police. This model of state capitalism meant for *Narodnaya volya* that the state *in its present form* was the main enemy of

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<sup>167</sup> Morozov "Vozniknovenie" p.20

<sup>168</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.194

<sup>169</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* pp.195-6

<sup>170</sup> "Stat'ya iz No.2 gazety '*Narodnaya volya*'" in *Byloe* no.2 1902 p.71

the *narod*, which in turn necessitated political, not social, revolution. The *narodovol'tsy* wanted to prepare not a popular rising, but a conspiracy to seize power and hand it to the *narod*.<sup>171</sup>

According to *Narodnaya volya*'s journal, the main task of the party was the overthrow of current state forms and the subjection of state power to the people.<sup>172</sup> To do anything for the *narod*, one first had free it from the power of the current state. If all the energy of the party were directed against the government, the focus could later move onto useful and productive work.<sup>173</sup> The ultimate end was to "give power over to the *narod*"; by this *Narodnaya volya* meant an assembly. Suppose an assembly were called; ninety percent of its representatives would be from the peasants, and, if the party acted intelligently, preparing the *narod* for political revolution, and carrying out electoral agitation, the result could be positive for both the peasants and the party.<sup>174</sup> This line was repeated in a later issue; the party must undertake a political revolution without waiting for a mass movement.<sup>175</sup> A political revolution could raise the political level of the *narod*; although at a time of revolution, the *narod* might express itself by passion and instinct, soon it would begin to recognise that it had rights, would begin to organise social relations and exercise control over its agents, in other words, become citizens.<sup>176</sup>

#### 5-1a: Disputes over Terrorism

Since the main enemy of the *narod* was the state, *Narodnaya volya* proposed attacking it directly, by means of terrorism. However, there was not complete agreement within the party on exactly what terrorism would achieve. There was some disagreement after the Lipetsk meeting over whether terrorism was intended to force the government into making democratic concessions, or whether the party was to seize power and

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<sup>171</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyyi* p.197

<sup>172</sup> "Stat'ya iz No.2 gazety '*Narodnaya volya*'" p.68

<sup>173</sup> "Stat'ya iz No.2 gazety '*Narodnaya volya*'" p.72

<sup>174</sup> "*Narodnaya volya* no.2" pp.73-4

<sup>175</sup> "*Narodnaya volya* no.4" in *Byloe* no.3 1903 pp.154-5

<sup>176</sup> "*Narodnaya volya* no.4" p.156

declare a constitution itself.<sup>177</sup> Nikolai Morozov, for example, envisioned a "terrorist revolution". In a pamphlet in which he tried to elevate terrorism into a theory, he described it as "the distillation of active revolutionary struggle".<sup>178</sup> By virtue of secrecy, and deadly accurate political murder, the struggle of the weak against the strong becomes a struggle of equals. Tsars and despots could no longer live peacefully when at any time an invisible avenger could give the sign that their time had come.<sup>179</sup> This system of struggle should be incorporated into tradition, so that whenever despotism arose, the oppressed would turn immediately to systematic political killings to remove it. Thus, Morozov still maintained that when socialists had freedom to express their ideas, terror would cease.

For a few, like A.Yakimova, terrorism could trigger the social revolution. By destroying the fatalism of the *narod*, and demonstrating that active struggle was possible, terror could arouse the spirit of action.<sup>180</sup> This view obviously tried to retain something of the element of social revolution which had been integral to the original programme of *Zemlya i volya*. Others still took a Jacobin view. This strand was embodied in Mariya Oshanina, who had been involved with Zaichnevskii and the Society of Communists in the 1860s. However, Jacobinism was not widespread; in so far as the idea of a provisional government was mooted, it was not a seizure of power by the party but a transition phase to popular rule.<sup>181</sup> Most, it seems, hoped for some sort of concessions in the form of a constitution and civil liberties. This was outlined in the letter from the Executive Committee to Aleksandr III after the successful assassination of his father, which called on the new tsar to hand power to the *narod*, after which violence would be replaced by peaceful ideological struggle. This could be accomplished by the calling of representatives from the Russian people, via free and universal suffrage, to reform social and state institutions in accordance with popular wishes.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> O. Lyubatovich "Dalekoe i nedavnee" in *Byloe* no.6 1906 p.121

<sup>178</sup> N. Morozov *Terroristicheskaya bor'ba* Geneva 1880 p.4

<sup>179</sup> Morozov *Terroristicheskaya bor'ba* p.7

<sup>180</sup> Hardy *Land* p.140

<sup>181</sup> Figner *Zapechatlennyi* p.201

<sup>182</sup> "Ispolnitel'nyi komitet imperatoru Aleksandru III" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 pp.194-5

## 5-1b: Organisation

As we have seen, in terms of organisation, *Narodnaya volya* was determinedly centralist. The "General Bases of the Organisation", written in 1880, outlined a network of small secret groups of lower rank centred on a higher-level local centre.<sup>183</sup> The entire organisation of the party was to be centred on the Executive Committee. Relations between local groups would be not federalist, but conducted via agents of a higher level group. Although local groups were to run their own finances and recruitment, activities such as terrorising officials, confiscations, relations with outside groups, proclamations and pamphlets on principles and party matters and so on were only to be conducted with the agreement of the Committee.<sup>184</sup> The secret instruction "The preparatory work of the party", written in Spring 1880, talks of a party with a secret society at its centre which is not elected by the party, but which itself chooses its members.<sup>185</sup>

It might be thought that as a conspiratorial society, the question of constituency was not particularly relevant to *Narodnaya volya*. Nevertheless, in spite of viewpoints such as Morozov's in which political terror was the whole of the revolution, the party did recognise the need to attract support. In this realm, as in others, *Narodnaya volya* made a decisive break with the past. "The preparatory work of the party" speaks of the need for workers' *druzhiny* in the main towns; of the need to secure the support of workers generally; of the need to bring over or paralyse the army; and the need to secure the support of the intelligentsia and European public opinion. The peasants are mentioned almost in passing. Links with liberals and constitutionalists are encouraged; liberals should be told that for now, their goals and those of the party were the same.<sup>186</sup> The workers were particularly important due to their strategic location, their ability to close down factories and represent popular interests, both in a possible rising, and in a provisional government. Therefore local groups should try to send members

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<sup>183</sup> "Obshchie nachala organizatsii" in Volk *Revolutsionnoe* v.2 p.209

<sup>184</sup> "Obshchie nachala organizatsii" pp.210-11

<sup>185</sup> "Podgotovitel'naya rabota partii" in Volk *Revolutsionnoe* v.2 p.177

<sup>186</sup> "Podgotovitel'naya rabota partii" pp.177-180

to all *fabriki* and *zavody* in their area. The idea of a political revolution meant centralism both in the organisation of the party, and in their choice of constituency, i.e. the inhabitants of the towns. Since *Narodnaya volya* were aiming their attack only at the political edifice, the political centres were important rather than the economic substratum of the country, the peasants. *Narodnaya volya* did indeed carry out quite extensive propaganda among workers, particularly in St. Petersburg.<sup>187</sup> In Autumn 1880 a "Programme of worker members of *Narodnaya volya*" presented workers as a separate group with specific demands, such as factory legislation and restriction of working hours.<sup>188</sup> These demands were however in conjunction with the more general demand of the party for an assembly and democratic rule; the workers were not called upon to form a political party to seize power for themselves, but to support *Narodnaya volya* in the destruction of the autocracy.

#### 5-2: Chernyi peredel

On the other hand, the new organisation founded by the *narodnik* faction of *Zemlya i volya* continued to focus on the peasants as the basis for revolution, which they continued to see as social and economic rather than political. *Chernyi peredel* are given scant space in the literature on the Russian revolutionary movement, in spite of the fact that their leaders were to become the founders of Russian Marxism. However, the organisation was born out of the majority faction of *Zemlya i volya*, and although it did not last long, its existence shows that the goals of social revolution by the peasants and workers, and federalism as the basis for the revolutionary organisation, were still alive in the Russian movement. *Chernyi peredel* issued the first number of their organ in January 1880; it was sub-headed "organ of the federalist socialists", and had as its slogan "*Zemlya i volya*", to show its affiliation to the original programme of that organisation.

In a leading article entitled "A letter to former colleagues", O.V. Aptekman described the differing approaches of *Narodnaya volya* and

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<sup>187</sup> On worker propaganda see D. Pearl "Educating Workers for Revolution: Populist Propaganda in St. Petersburg 1879-1882" in *Russian History* v.15 no.2-4 (1988) pp.255-284

<sup>188</sup> "Programma rabochikh, chlenov Narodnoi voli" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 pp.188-9



*Chernyi peredel* as systematic war with the government for political revolution, and economic revolution, respectively.<sup>189</sup> History, he claimed, showed that political revolution did not help the *narod* to win economic and political freedom; this was a metaphysical, ideals-led proposition which ignored real economic relations.<sup>190</sup> Looking at the French revolution, Aptekman criticises not the Jacobins themselves but the means and methods they employed to try to win political freedom, i.e. the use of the old statist principle. This principle was the same whether it was the "single, unified Republic", Louis XIV's absolutism, or Napoleon's Empire - statism and centralism, authority and the subjection of the masses.<sup>191</sup> By 1848, the best and most advanced people had come to see the interests of the masses were expressed in socialism, and the reorganisation of economic and social relations by and through the masses themselves. Other examples such as Italy, Spain, Poland and Serbia were alluded to in support of the argument that political freedom did not liberate the masses.

Aptekman addressed pertinent questions to the *narodovol'tsy* in his article; what was to be the basis for a political revolution in Russia, on which class was it to be based? Without a popular revolution of workers and peasants the nobles, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia were hardly enough.<sup>192</sup> This left the party itself. But even if the party won and forced a constitution, the bourgeoisie was quite capable of using it to turn its interests into laws; it already has economic and savings societies, scholars, lawyers, literati and capitalists ready to take a slice of the cake which a constitution would make available.<sup>193</sup> *Chernyi peredel* saw the task of revolutionaries as preparing the minds of the *narod* in peacetime, and organising them in revolution. Their role was to act as initiators; subsequently representatives and organisers would arise from the *narod* itself. If the *narod* were not prepared, the revolution could pass like a storm through Russia and bring them no benefit. The party which ignores the *narod* would become the party of reaction. In

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<sup>189</sup> *Chernyi peredel* (reprint Moscow/Petrograd 1923) no.1 Jan 1880 pp.122-3

<sup>190</sup> *Chernyi peredel* p.124

<sup>191</sup> *Chernyi peredel* p.126

<sup>192</sup> *Chernyi peredel* p.132

*Narodnaya volya*, what appeared to be a new direction was in fact an outdated one.<sup>194</sup>

*Chernyi peredel's* press was seized as the first issue was being put out, and leading figures like Plekhanov, Zasulich and Deich were forced to flee abroad. The journal did not reappear until September 1880, produced in Geneva, and only in March 1881 did it begin to be published inside Russia. Pavel Aksel'rod remained in Russia trying to hold the party together with limited success. In Autumn 1880, Aksel'rod, along with his colleagues in exile, produced a programme which recognised the political activity to a certain extent, but continued to insist on a federalist socialist organisation concentrating on the peasants.<sup>195</sup>

In *Chernyi peredel* then the traditions of populism found some continuity, and the debates over constituency, tactics, organisation and political/economic revolution were kept alive. Their proposed constituency and hope for economic revolution have been outlined above. It is difficult to elaborate on their organisational forms, since in practice the blow struck against them by the police in January 1880 and the arrest and emigration of most of the leading figures meant that large organisation was not achieved. However the repeated references to federalism and their adoption of the tag "federalist socialists" allow us to assume that their organisational forms would have been federalist, unlike those of *Narodnaya volya*. A project for an *ustav*, written in February 1880, has survived, so it is possible to judge at least what their intentions were.<sup>196</sup> It was proposed to create a central bureau, whose tasks would be to collect information on social and popular affairs, and information on local circles. It would remain, however, under the control of local circles, as would the general funds of the organisation. This is the outline of an organisation in which the centre is weak, and controlled by the local circles, rather than the other way around.

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<sup>193</sup> *Chernyi peredel* p. 135

<sup>194</sup> *Chernyi peredel* p.141

<sup>195</sup> "Programma severno-russkogo soyuza 'Zemlya i volya'" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 pp.148-150

<sup>196</sup> "Proekt ustava chernoperedel'cheskogo obshchestva 'Zemlya i volya'" in *Volk Revolyutsionnoe* v.2 pp.146-7

*Chernyi peredel* reflected the views of "orthodox" Populism, envisaging a long, slow campaign of propaganda among workers and peasants to build a mass movement. They claimed the isolation from the masses implied by a political terrorist campaign could only lead to revolutionaries replacing the state rather than destroying it. They emphasised federalism rather than centralism in their organisation, agrarian revolution and a redistribution of the land. "If the popular forces are not organised, then even the most heroic fight put up by the revolutionaries will prove advantageous only to the upper classes; the liberation of the people must be the work of the people themselves" wrote Plekhanov.<sup>197</sup>

### 5-3: The South Russian Union of Workers

However, the debate was not merely one of terrorism and political revolution (*Narodnaya volya*) against propaganda by word and social revolution (*Chernyi peredel*). Like *Chernyi peredel*, the aim of the South Russian Union of Workers in 1880-81 was to increase the political consciousness and organised activity of workers and peasants, and thus prepare a social and economic revolution carried out by, not in the name of, the exploited classes. E. Koval'skaya and N. Shchedrin shared the idea that the basis of revolutionary activity should be among the masses, but they approved of terror as a means. When *Zemlya i volya* split, they joined *Chernyi peredel* which they saw as being closer to the *narod*. However they split with them over tactics; they felt that working in the countryside was impossible, because by the time you had gained the trust of the peasants the police were on your trail; furthermore, tactics of economic terror were more easily understood than written propaganda, it protected the immediate interests of workers and raised their revolutionary spirits, and produced popular propagandists who could go to the countryside and be more readily accepted than intelligentsia revolutionaries.<sup>198</sup> In Kiev they worked out an anarchist programme with tactics of economic terrorism, and began to build relations with the rail and arsenal workers, where the idea of economic terror

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<sup>197</sup> Venturi *Roots* p.661

<sup>198</sup> A. Levandovskii *Elizaveta Nikolaevna Koval'skaya* Moscow 1928 p.23

found favour.<sup>199</sup> A *kruzhok* formed which became the South Russian Workers' Union.

Since the group had no money and, unlike that of *Narodnaya volya*, its programme evinced no support from wealthy liberals, Koval'skaya and Shchedrin did not expect to build a large organisation. In fact negotiations with *Narodnaya volya* came to naught for the very reason that the *narodovol'tsy* feared that the Union's activities would scare off the liberals.<sup>200</sup> They were forced to work in the town because new faces in villages were so much more conspicuous, and both Shchedrin and Koval'skaya were wanted by the police. However, links with peasants were formed by workers.<sup>201</sup> Their first proclamation was uncompromising, and illustrative of what is meant by economic terrorism. Addressed to the boss of the Kiev arsenal, it gave him three weeks to meet workers' demands for shorter hours and more pay, or face a death sentence. After four days, most of the demands were met. A second proclamation insisted on the rest.<sup>202</sup> These too were duly fulfilled, and hundreds of workers immediately joined the Union. Meetings had to be held out of town, and eventually the workers had to be divided into groups of about a hundred, so that Shchedrin and Koval'skaya had to address meetings every night of the week. In June 1880 a press was set up and leaflets were printed about trials, executions, the conditions of local peasants, the meaning of economic terrorism, as well as threats and demands against local land- and factory owners. These were distributed in Kiev, Rostov, Kremenchug, Ekaterinoslav, Odessa and Nikolaev, in Russian and Ukrainian, and transport of illegal literature from abroad was also arranged. Shchedrin and Koval'skaya were arrested at the end of 1880, but the Union continued to operate without them for a further four months. However, it was eventually given away by a spy, and further arrests brought it to an end.

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<sup>199</sup> The programme is reprinted in V.V. Maksakov/V.I. Nevskii (eds) *Yuzhno-russkie rabochie soyuzy* Moscow 1924 pp.260-264

<sup>200</sup> E. Koval'skaya "Yuzhnyi rabochii soyuz v 1880-81gg" in *Byloe* no.6 1904 (Houghton Collection 949) p.37

<sup>201</sup> Koval'skaya "Yuzhnyi rabochii soyuz" p.38

<sup>202</sup> These proclamations are reprinted in *Yuzhno-russkie rabochie soyuzy* pp.270-274

With the downfall of the Southern Union, the activities of the rebels were effectively over, and the enforced emigration of Plekhanov and other leading figures of *Chernyi peredel* left the field more or less clear for *Narodnaya volya*'s campaign of political change. However as we have seen, their activities broadened the debate from one of merely propaganda vs. terrorism at the end of the 1870s; the Union recognised that political terror could disorganise government forces, but their aim was to encourage workers and peasants themselves to hit back against their exploiters. They were in agreement with the federal and economic policies of *Chernyi peredel* but wanted to offer workers a tactic which would place them in a sharply antagonistic position with their exploiters and thus the state. Therefore they called on peasants to seize land, burn crops and buildings and attack the *pomeshchiki*, and on workers to attack factory directors, to smash machinery and to commit arson. As such it can be said that they were looking to traditional peasant methods of violent revolt, as opposed to what might be called "modern" types of political activity.

## **6: Conclusion**

What we have seen then over the course of the 1870s in Russian Populism is the growth and predominance of a tendency which favoured political change as a precursor to social revolution, which favoured as tactics conspiracy and terrorism, and a hierarchical, disciplined, and centralised organisation. Ironically, this was encouraged by some who had formerly been *buntari*, who had wanted a mass-based peasant movement but were now prepared to turn their activism to other uses. Against this were pitted the ideas of a social movement organised on a federalist basis, co-ordinated but without a centralist leadership which could lead to dictatorship, within which were a minority which continued the buntarist tradition through a campaign of economic terror carried out by workers and peasants themselves against their immediate enemies, the bosses and the landlords, rather than heads of government. Both of these groups rejected the idea of political revolution advocated by *Narodnaya volya*, which they claimed could not alleviate significantly the situation of peasants and workers, which was economically

based and could only be changed by a thoroughgoing social and economic revolution. Thus *Narodnaya volya*'s terrorism was aimed at political change, to a change in the system of governance of Russia; to achieve this they chose a centralised conspiratorial form of organisation. Both the propagandism of *Chernyi peredel* and the economic terror of the South Russian Union were linked to federalist socialism and economic and social revolution and the desire to build a broad popular organisation. The centralist/federalist, political/social debate reflected that in the socialist movement in Europe in the early 1870s, as Bakunin and the anarchists took on Marx's attempts to turn the General Council of the International into a centralised governing body, and attacked the Marxists' desire to conquer the state with their programme of destroying political authority altogether. The debates on terrorism as a tactic, and of political vs. economic terror were also reflected in Europe, this time within the anarchist movement.

What this chapter has tried to show in more general terms is that the development of the Russian revolutionary movement was not a linear one from popular propaganda towards political terror; in fact, as we saw in the discussion of *Zemlya i volya*, during the second half of the 1870s there was a proliferation of views on tactics, organisation, constituency and goals. In relation to this, I have also tried to show that the model of *Zemlya i volya* developing towards a centralised conspiratorial party, which was forced onto the path of terror and a political revolution by government repressions which made it impossible to work in the *narod*, is inadequate. In fact a minority grew within the organisation which favoured centralism and political struggle; the majority continued to focus on the building of a broad popular organisation within the peasantry and the workers. This "political" minority was strongly influenced from outside the organisation, largely by the political movement which grew in the south of Russia, and which was conducted into the very centre of *Zemlya i volya* by Valerian Osinskii. This tendency was itself influenced by the Balkan war, the effects of which were very visible in the southern towns, by the desire of society to have influence over those who were prosecuting that war, and in particular (and this was not restricted

to the south) by the granting of a constitution in Bulgaria and Russia's hypocritical parading as the liberator of the Slavs. All of these factors strengthened the political tendency in the Russian revolutionary movement which chose to create a centralist organisation and use regicide as its means to pursue political freedoms. This centralist and statist tendency was to become the dominant force in the Russian revolutionary movement, while federalist socialism never recovered the strength it had achieved in the 1870s.

## Chapter 6: Kropotkin and European Anarchism in the Late 1870s

### 1: Introduction

The first part of this final chapter will be dedicated to a biographical study of Kropotkin, cross-referenced where appropriate to the chapter on the Chaikovskii circle. I do not intend to devote too much space to Kropotkin's early life before his contact with the revolutionary movement; but I shall mention formative influences which he shared with many Russian revolutionaries, such as disappointment with reforms, anger at the repression of the student movement and the Polish rising, experience of the uselessness of administrative changes, the appalling conditions of workers and peasants and the influence of the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune. Other relevant issues are Kropotkin's contact with the International, his commitment to revolutionary means and his disappointment with Nikolai Utin and the "political" wing of the International and preference for the federalist anti-politics of the Jura Federation and consequent conversion to anarchism. Kropotkin's work with the *Chaikovtsy* will be briefly examined, but the major points of his role with the circle are adequately outlined in Chapter 2. Finally this section will describe Kropotkin's escape to Europe, where he joined the anarchist movement.

The second section will deal with the European anarchist movement. Issues will include the agitation against parliamentarism, and the split with the Marxists in the International. I shall outline the growth of insurrectionist tactics in the early 1870s, from Bakunin through the organisations in Spain and Italy, and the debates surrounding the competing tactics of insurrection and strikes, which in turn is linked to issues of constituency. The next section will deal with the idea of propaganda by deed, as originally outlined by Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero as insurrection by workers and peasants; this will be discussed and compared with the efforts of the *buntari* and economic terrorists in Russia. The spread of the idea of propaganda by deed in the Anti-authoritarian International will also be examined, along with the subtle change



in interpretation of propaganda by deed by Paul Brousse, compared to Kropotkin's developing ideas on the subject.

The next part of this chapter concerns the rise of terror in anarchism. In this context, a demonstration in Bern, and attempts in Italy to start insurrections will be examined; the risings and demonstrations illustrate the competing views on revolutionary action in both Russia and Europe. I shall refer to articles in the anarchist press to show the differing views on what propaganda by deed meant. Also important are Kropotkin's and others' views on individual and small-group actions, referring to the movements in Europe and Russia. I shall demonstrate both the growing influence of Russian terrorism on the European anarchists and the similar nature of the debates going on in both movements; Cafiero's calls for immediate violent action, and an organisation of small autonomous terrorist cells competed with the aims of Kropotkin and others for a federal mass movement. The growth of "amorphousness" (independent cells with no central organisation) in anarchism will be examined in relation to the growing interpretation of propaganda by deed as terrorism rather than insurrection, and appropriate comparisons with the Russian movement will be made. The coterminous rise of anarchist communism will also be discussed.

Finally in this chapter I intend to look at the anarchists' conference of 1881 to sum up the debates in the anarchist movement, based on the conspectuses published by M. Nettlau and in "Le Révolté"; mass movement vs. small cells, agitation and insurrection vs. bombs, Malatesta's idea of an organisation to fight the state directly, and the debate on morality. This will all be compared with contemporaneous debates in the Russian revolutionary movement, discussed in the previous chapter, and the differing aims of anarchist and populist terror will be elaborated upon. Comparisons will be made between Russia and Europe in relation to the apparent shift from "the liberation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves" to "the revolutionary struggle is the task of the revolutionaries alone".

## **2: The Early Life of Petr Kropotkin**

### **2-1: Russia**

Despite the fact that Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin (1842-1921) was one of the most forceful and intelligent proponents of socialist theory and revolutionary practice, surprisingly little has been written about him,<sup>1</sup> perhaps because historians on the whole have tended to focus on history's "winners"; Kropotkin's conception of socialism was of the no-government or anarchist type, and there has as yet never been a successful anarchist revolution. Since, as I shall demonstrate, Kropotkin played a significant role in the development of anarchists' ideas on revolutionary organisation and action in the late 1870s, he is a figure worth studying in order to highlight the debates consuming (even splitting) anarchism and the similarities and differences between this movement and Russian Populism. This section will outline Kropotkin's early years, before his flight to the West and involvement in socialism there; subsequently the focus will shift to a broader study of developments in anarchism in the 1870s and Kropotkin's role in those developments.

Kropotkin was born in 1842 into a family of the old Russian aristocracy which traced its line back to the Ryurik dynasty. His father Aleksei was a wealthy landowner and a product of the military-bureaucratic ethos of Nicholas I.<sup>2</sup> Petr witnessed first hand the cruelty of landlords to their serfs; forced marriages, army service, floggings. As he grew up he came to believe that all this served only to maintain the useless and decadent existence of the aristocracy.<sup>3</sup> Alienation from his class began early; he stopped using the title "prince" at the age of twelve.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The main works on Kropotkin in English are: G. Woodcock/I. Avakumovich *The Anarchist Prince* London/New York 1950, which lacks references and bibliography; M. Miller *Kropotkin* Chicago 1976 and C. Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism* London 1989, both of which have excellent bibliographies and source lists. Kropotkin receives a chapter in most general works on anarchism. In Russian the best study is N.M. Pirumova *Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin* Moscow 1972. The main sources for the early part of Kropotkin's life are his memoirs, P. Kropotkin *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1971 (many other editions are available), correspondence with his brother, and his diary, both of which have been published: Petr i Aleksandr Kropotkin *Perepiska* (2 vols) Moscow 1932-3, *Dnevnik P.A. Kropotkina* Moscow 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Miller *Kropotkin* p.5

<sup>3</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.20

<sup>4</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.47

As Kropotkin grew older he was enrolled in the Corps of Pages; the influence of his elder brother Alexander came to the fore at this time, since now that they were both away from home they were able to correspond with each other. Their correspondence contains a wealth of reflections of the intellectual climate of the late 1850s and early 1860s. Alexander raised scientific and philosophical questions, and as young intellectuals reacted against art, he abandoned his poetry and focused on the natural sciences,<sup>5</sup> trying (in vain) to convert Petr to scientific materialism, the creed of the so-called Nihilists. However Kropotkin's interest in political and social matters began to grow in the late 1850s. Through his cousin he came across Herzen's "Pole Star", and was possessed by the breadth of his ideas and his love of Russia.<sup>6</sup> In 1859 Kropotkin produced his own revolutionary paper as a constitutionalist. He only produced two numbers however; comrades at the Corps advised him that it was too risky and instead they formed a study circle.

Finishing top of his class at the Corps, Kropotkin was duly appointed personal page to the Emperor. In the course of his close contact with Alexander II the initial admiration for the man whom he had seen as a liberal who had freed the serfs was gradually lost.<sup>7</sup> Starting with the repression of student unrest and the Sunday School movement in 1861 the Tsar's policy became more reactionary, and Kropotkin saw the lack of royal commitment to liberal ideas. Kropotkin decided not to remain at court when the time came to choose a posting and elected instead to serve with the newly formed Amur Cossacks, about as far from the capital as it was possible to be. His intention was to try to work for reform in a region where the influence of the court was weak. The administration of the Amur region was liberal; in fact the governor was later to be dismissed for colluding in the escape of Bakunin. Kropotkin's desire to be a useful member of society, to work for change, in particular to improve life for the peasants, led his brother to write, "you speak of this future life for society as about a debt."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.95

<sup>6</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.127

<sup>7</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.142

<sup>8</sup> *Perepiska I* p.187, quoted in *Cahm Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.21

Kropotkin's five years in Siberia (1862-67) were, he claimed, crucial in turning him towards anarchism, although at the time of course he did not formulate his experiences in political terms. (Indeed the term anarchism was not in common use until the mid 1870s.) His conversion to anarchism had various roots. Firstly, as we have seen, the growing reaction of Alexander II's regime and the retreat of liberalism prompted Kropotkin to leave the capital for the Amur. Secondly, in Siberia he gradually discovered the uselessness of trying to effect change through the administrative system.<sup>9</sup>

In Siberia and on geographical expeditions Kropotkin became aware of the "inner springs of human society". To live with the Dukhobortsy and the native peoples was to witness working societies independent of "civilisation".<sup>10</sup> He began to publish articles on the poverty of the Siberian workforce and the tyranny of the administration.<sup>11</sup> Exiles and convicts, he claimed, were alienated from authority *as such* because of its nature in Russia. As the reaction spread from the capital to the provinces he became increasingly sceptical about the possibility of reform. On witnessing the conditions of life in the Lena goldfields he wrote to his brother that for things to improve, capitalism had to be abandoned and replaced by a system of aid associations. He left Siberia and the military in 1867 in the wake of the execution of the leaders of a rebellion of Polish forced labourers. This, combined with the conditions of the workers, the failure of reform, disgust with official life and his own moral sense, had changed Kropotkin's world view.

The next three years were spent mostly back in St. Petersburg completing geographical work on Siberia. Here he felt the effects on society of the Franco-Prussian war ("a clash of ruling classes and national powers at the expense of the masses") and above all the Paris Commune. The mood of radical youth was of sympathy for the Communards, and many stood for a proletarian victory. A fearful Russian government tried to use the Nechaev

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<sup>9</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.216

<sup>10</sup> The Dukhobortsy were a religious group whose pacifism often put them in conflict with the Russian state; for example, they not only refused to bear arms but also refused to pay taxes to a state which supported a large army. Eventually the Dukhobortsy left Russia for Canada, with the assistance of Lev Tolstoy and Kropotkin, amongst others.

<sup>11</sup> Miller *Kropotkin* p.64

trial to suggest a link from Paris to St. Petersburg via the International. Kropotkin meanwhile, in experiencing the joys of scientific discovery (he elaborated a completely new theory on the structure of the Asian continent which remains largely uncontested today) felt shame that such joy was the privilege of so few, and purchased at the expense of the peasants.<sup>12</sup> Thus Kropotkin's initial impulse for active involvement in the revolutionary movement would appear to be similar to that of many young students at the time, the idea expressed by Lavrov in his *Historical Letters* that the educated owed a debt to the poor which must be repaid by helping the poor to emancipate themselves.

In 1871 Kropotkin travelled to Switzerland to meet the International and at last to make a commitment to revolution. He felt the devotion of the workers to their organisation as a reproach to himself and saw the need for educated people to help the workers. He despaired that so many chose instead to make political capital out of the workers' position.<sup>13</sup> By this he was referring to the Marxists of Geneva, in particular Nikolai Utin, and their political intrigues, exemplified by their attempts to avert a builders' strike for fear of damaging the chances of an electoral candidate. This dismay at what he saw as the cynicism of the Marxists was decisive in determining Kropotkin's anarchist position on revolutionary matters. He set off to visit the federalists of the Jura mountains, who were opposed to Marx's centralism and the dictatorship of the General Council of the IWA, advocating avoidance of "bourgeois politics" in favour of social revolution for a federated collectivist system. The Jura workers impressed Kropotkin greatly, as did their forms of organisation which had no hierarchical distinctions and no centres of power. He felt that the system worked because it allowed the natural activity of the workers to function in their own interests.<sup>14</sup> This all tied in so well with Kropotkin's cast of mind and experiences that he was now prepared to call himself an anarchist. On his return to Russia, armed with socialist literature,

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<sup>12</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.240

<sup>13</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.278

<sup>14</sup> Miller *Kropotkin* p.81

he joined the Chaikovskii circle, and became one of their most energetic and effective propagandists.

## 2-2: The Chaikovskii Circle

As we saw in Chapter 2, when Kropotkin joined the Chaikovskii circle in early 1872 there were tactical and ideological differences both within the St. Petersburg group and between the various local groups. Various tendencies advocated self-education, or propaganda among the intelligentsia, or propaganda among the masses, and constitutionalism was also being discussed. Kropotkin's arrival added a further ideological strand. Nikolai Drago's memoir says that at this time the circle had nothing revolutionary about it;<sup>15</sup> Kropotkin's memoir states that Klements called them "mostly constitutionalists, but open to any honest idea",<sup>16</sup> while Charushin stresses the importance of agitation among the workers, although *knizhnoe delo* continued.<sup>17</sup> When Kropotkin joined he offered to agitate for a constitution at court; however this was turned down, possibly because by this time contact had been made with the workers,<sup>18</sup> and this along with an influx of more radical members in late 1871/early 1872 (Kravchinskii, Klements, Sinegub and others besides Kropotkin) moved the general orientation of the circle towards popular agitation and propaganda. The circle remained however determined to avoid conspiracy and terrorism.

On joining the circle Kropotkin was at first involved with the production and distribution of popular brochures, printed on the press which had been founded abroad. He wrote the ending to L. Tikhomirov's *Pugachev* in a buntarist vein, urging mass peasant risings. He was also involved in the development of the Moscow group, whom he apparently encouraged to turn to the countryside rather than the town.<sup>18</sup> He spent more and more time with the workers however, and along with Klements and Kravchinskii devoted much time to the *zavodskie* circle, in spite of his (later) stated preference for

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<sup>15</sup> N. Drago "Zapiski starogo narodnika" in *Katorga i ssylka* no.4 1924 p.11

<sup>16</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.304

<sup>17</sup> N. Charushin *O dalekom proshlom* Moscow 1973 p.141

<sup>18</sup> Miller, *Kropotkin* p.94

the *fabrichnye*.<sup>19</sup> Early populist propaganda painted a fairly simplistic picture of the *narod* and their friends against their overlords. Despite the lack of reference to specifically worker problems there is no evidence of hostility in the *fabrichnye* circle towards the students; however as we have seen in Chapter 2 hostility did appear in the *zavodskie* circle, which along with the increasing attentions of the police in the capital, and Kravchinskii's and Rogachev's success in "going to the people", may have encouraged Kropotkin to focus on propagandising the peasants.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the manifesto of the Chaikovskii circle, written in 1873 by Kropotkin. This document occupies a central role in Miller's discussion of Populist ideology.<sup>20</sup> It is also Kropotkin's first political work and thus a valuable indication of his early thinking<sup>21</sup>. The manifesto is divided into two parts; the first being an examination of the ideal of a future society, the second of tactics and practical activity. In the first part, Kropotkin examines the ideal of equality and proposes common (not state) ownership of the means of production. Work should also be made egalitarian, with no privileged labour of managers and intellectuals, and an end to the division of labour into factory, field and mental work. In education there should be no distinction between practical and intellectual work, and all should be free to learn and perform manual and intellectual/artistic tasks. Finally Kropotkin dismisses the idea of representative government and proposes self-government in a system of small federated settlements. All this can only be achieved by social revolution.

The second part of the manifesto tackles the practical problems facing the revolutionaries. Kropotkin writes that the revolutionary party cannot make the revolution but can only hasten and help it. This is a rejection of Jacobinism and of political struggle. The most fundamental problem it deals with however is where to direct propaganda. Kropotkin believes that it has to

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<sup>19</sup> R. Zelnik "Populists and Workers" in *Soviet Studies* v.24 no.2 (Oct. 1972) p.264

<sup>20</sup> M. Miller "Ideological conflicts in Russian Populism" in *Slavic Review* v.29 no.1 (March 1970) pp.1-21

<sup>21</sup> P.A. Kropotkin "Dolzhny li my zanyat'sya rassmotreniem ideala budushchego stroya?" in *Byloe* no.17 1921. This version was presented by the police to the Council of Ministers and is slightly

be to the *narod*, as the intelligentsia is for the most part too attached to its privileges. This was an important difference between the approaches of Lavrov and Bakunin, as we have seen. Revolutionaries must immediately sacrifice the institutions and values of the past and live the life of the common man in order to create agitators from among the people. Circles of workers should be formed to train agitators who will in turn form their own circles in the town and the countryside. Communes for workers should be set up also. Much of this was an affirmation of what was already going on in St. Petersburg of course, but the manifesto is an important indication of Kropotkin's anarchist populism. As we shall see, his attention to the need to include the peasants in the revolution, and his proposed tactics of armed insurrection to accomplish the revolution, would find echoes in the anarchist movement in Europe in the near future.

### 2-3: Kropotkin in Western Europe

The wave of arrests in St. Petersburg which began in 1873 caught up with Kropotkin early in 1874. He was given away by an informer, arrested and confined to the Peter and Paul fortress, where eventually his health began to suffer. In 1876 he was moved to the prison hospital where he made a rapid recovery, a fact which he concealed from the authorities, since a plan was being hatched to bring about his escape. With the assistance of friends on the outside Kropotkin escaped under the noses of his guards in broad daylight and was whisked away in a fast carriage. Despite a massive search neither he nor his accomplices were discovered. Kropotkin spent that evening in one of St. Petersburg's best restaurants and later left the capital, crossing Finland, travelling by steamer to Sweden and subsequently to England. From this point begins the part of Kropotkin's life which is best known: his involvement in the European anarchist movement as both activist and theoretician.

According to his memoirs, Kropotkin did not intend to stay abroad for longer than a few weeks or months; enough to recover his health and allow the dust to settle after his escape.<sup>22</sup> However he decided that he was too well

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shortened. The original appears in B.S. Itenberg (ed.) *Revolutsionnoe narodnichestvo* v.1 Moscow 1964 pp.55-118

<sup>22</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.378



known in Russia to propagandise openly, and would be of more use to the workers' movement in the West, "to deepen and widen the ideals and principles which will underlie the coming social revolution... before the workers, not as an order coming from their leaders but as a result of their own reason."<sup>23</sup> After a short time in Edinburgh Kropotkin went to London in search of work, which he found with the scientific journal *Nature*. (He recounts that at one point, due to his use of an assumed name, he was asked by the editor to review new works on glaciation and orography by the Russian geographer, P. Kropotkin.) It was not long however before he left England for Switzerland to renew his acquaintance with the Jura Federation.

The Jura Federation which had so inspired Kropotkin in 1871 was now in decline and threatened by the reformist Social Democracy which was growing in the socialist movement. Thus Kropotkin's first task was to agitate against parliamentarism; socialism should be an expression of popular will and this was hindered by parliamentary "savants".<sup>24</sup> According to Kropotkin the electoral success of the Social Democrats in the German Reichstag aroused the hope that a socialist state could be brought about by legislation. Thus the socialist ideal of this group changed from something to be worked out by labour organisations to state management of industry, or state capitalism. This had been the essence of the conflict between Marxists and anarchists within the International which had resulted in that organisation splitting and an "Anti-authoritarian International" being formed.

### **3: Anarchism in Europe**

#### **3-1: The Break with the Marxists<sup>25</sup>**

The split in the International Workingmen's Association which resulted in the Anti-authoritarian International had its roots in the differences in conceptions of the aims and means of revolution, and of the necessary forms of organisation, between two camps within the organisation, as enunciated

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<sup>23</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.379

<sup>24</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.45

<sup>25</sup> This section is based largely on J. Braunthal's *History of the International 1864-1914* v.1 London 1966, although I have tried to balance his pro-Marxist account with sources more sympathetic to the anarchists, such as C. Cahm's *Kropotkin and the Rise...* and P. Marshall *Demanding the Impossible* London 1992.

by the conflict between Bakunin and Marx. Since the rest of this chapter will be devoted to debates and activities which took place within the Anti-authoritarian International, it is worth taking a brief look at how this organisation came to be formed from the old International.

The formal split began at the private London conference of the International in September 1871. Citing the Franco-Prussian war as a reason for not holding a full congress, the General Council called this meeting, which was attended by only twenty-three delegates, of whom thirteen were Council members.<sup>26</sup> The General Council used this conference to try to bring the local sections under tighter central control, forbidding "sectarian" names such as Mutualist, Collectivist or Communist from being used, as well as the formation of separatist bodies such as "propaganda sections". The main attack on Bakuninism however was contained in Resolution 9 of the conference, which excluded political abstentionism and concluded that the constitution of the working class into a political party was indispensable. Abstention from politics in favour of direct economic action was, as we have seen in Chapter 1, one of the central planks of Bakunin's programme. For the sections which adhered more closely to Bakuninism, Resolution 9 amounted to an order from the General Council to abandon their own line on revolutionary tactics and adopt that of the Council. In response, James Guillaume, Adhémar Schwitzguébel and August Spichiger of the Jura Federation called a conference in November in Sonvillier and issued the Sonvillier Circular. This document refused to accept the resolutions of the London conference and denounced the "dictatorial powers" the General Council was trying to assume. The authors disputed Marx's thesis of the necessity of participation in bourgeois politics and called for the Council to be reduced in scope to a correspondence and statistics bureau. The General Council was accused effectively of trying to replace the free federation of autonomous sections of the International with a hierarchical authoritarian organisation under its own control.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J. Braunthal *History of the International 1864-1914* v.1 London 1966 p.180

<sup>27</sup> Braunthal *History of the International* v.1 p.183

The final battle was played out at the congress of the International at the Hague the following year. The venue itself was controversial since most of Bakunin's supporters were concentrated in the south of Europe and travel to the North would be difficult. The Italians, who had formally founded their national federation in August 1872, boycotted the congress beforehand; having criticised the authoritarianism of the General Council and Resolution 9, they formally broke with the Council and called for an anti-authoritarian congress to be held separately. This did not take place, as the Jura Federation were participating at The Hague. Here, the General Council proposed empowering itself to suspend or expel sections and federations without congress approval, an attempt to accrue still greater power to control the direction of the International.<sup>28</sup> Bakunin was accused by Marx and Engels of creating a secret society within the International with the aim of placing its sections under his direct control. They also produced Nechaev's threatening letter to the publisher's agent who had commissioned Bakunin to translate Marx's *Capital*. Bakunin and Guillaume were expelled from the International, and its headquarters were moved from London to New York; the delegate Maltman Barry called this a *coup d'état*.<sup>29</sup> The New York council soon collapsed.

### 3-2: The Anti-Authoritarian International

The split was now complete. The anarchists called a congress in St. Imier, attended by the Spanish, Italian and Jura Federations, as well as sections from France and America, proclaiming their complete independence from the General Council and rejecting the decisions of The Hague. They abolished the central ruling body and called on sections and federations to maintain direct contact with each other. Resolution 3 of this congress called for the destruction of political power, claiming that power held even provisionally by the International would lead to the creation of a new exploiting class. They emphasised solidarity in revolutionary action outside of bourgeois politics in a pact, and insisted that uniform policy for emancipation

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<sup>28</sup> Braunthal *History of the International* v.1 p.186

<sup>29</sup> Braunthal *History of the International* v.1 pp.186-7

should not be imposed on the proletariat; only the free and spontaneous action of the masses could liberate society.

In spite of the clearly anti-statist tone of this congress, the St. Imier declaration aroused broad support in the International, as the tactics used by the General Council against Bakunin and his sympathisers had generated widespread hostility. Thus when the inaugural congress of the Anti-authoritarian International was held in Geneva in 1873, it was attended also by the Dutch, Belgian and English Federations. However the English made it clear that they did not agree with the Jura Federation on the question of action, but in keeping with the federal principle of the International and autonomy of federations and sections, they were prepared to co-operate with the Bakuninists while continuing to espouse their own tactics.

This tension, present from the beginning of the Anti-authoritarian International, persisted, and was one of the factors leading the anarchists to define their position more clearly - and more intransigently. At the second congress, in Brussels, disagreements arose over the proposal of Cesar de Paepe for a federative state to run public services; the anarchists dismissed this as the reconstitution of the state and insisted on free federations based on mutual agreements. Furthermore, the Germans, who had decided to attend this congress, declared that they needed a strong centralised organisation in order to combat the centralised German state, and maintained the need to use only legal means so as to avoid suppression. The Belgians and Jurassians argued for abstention from parliamentary politics, while the Spanish delegate argued that the situation in Spain, Italy and France was such that the workers had to concentrate on revolutionary, not political, action, and he warned that a similar situation would develop in Germany as a result of government persecution of socialism.<sup>30</sup> The rift continued to develop, and the next congress manifested increasing polarity between statist and anti-statist positions, as well as disunity within some of the federations themselves. The final congress, at Verviers in 1877, was not attended by any statist at all, and the attempt to re-establish unity with a general socialist

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<sup>30</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* pp.31-2

congress in Ghent that year ended with the social democrats holding a secret meeting to work out a declaration of solidarity which excluded the anti-statists.<sup>31</sup>

These battles within the socialist movement between statist and anti-statists, as well as the contemporary situation in Europe during the 1870s of popular unrest in many countries, followed by government repression and in some places the outlawing of the International, forced anarchists to work out positions on ideals and aims, organisation, and revolutionary praxis which both emphasised their uncompromising opposition to the current oppressive social and economic order, and marked out positions distinct from parliamentary socialists. In practice, as we shall see, this led some sections of the movement to turn in on themselves, adopting increasingly extreme positions and exacerbating the anarchists' isolation from workers and peasants.

### 3-3: Revolutionary Tactics

In spite of the insistence of Bakunin, noted in the first chapter, that for the social revolution to succeed it was vital to include the peasants, as well as the so-called "lumpenproletariat", as active subjects rather than passive objects, nevertheless the International remained in the early 1870s an overwhelmingly urban proletarian organisation. The tactics which most of the federations, including the anarchist ones, hoped to employ to bring about the revolution centred on strikes, and the ultimate weapon of the General Strike. However not only Bakunin's summons to organise the peasants, but the lessons of popular revolts in France and Spain, powerful social unrest in Italy and the difficulties of maintaining an organised labour movement in the face of increasing repression from European governments led to examinations of, and experiments with, new tactics.

Anarchists had been critical of the moderation and authoritarian structures within the labour movement, but an early form of syndicalism did emerge in the Bakuninist wing of the International. It was noted that strikes could win concessions and foster the workers' consciousness of their own

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<sup>31</sup> Braunthal *History of the International* v.1 p.193

power within the productive process.<sup>32</sup> Many however were wary of "wildcat" strikes without backing from unions or strike funds. In 1868, Cesar de Paepe had proposed an international federation of unions, and in 1869 the Congress had suggested trying to suppress the wage system by a series of strikes for uniform wages. Bakunin, while not impressed by reformism, saw the importance of unions in creating solidarity, but discouraged premature conflict to allow time for organisations to achieve strength. The organisation and federation of resistance funds could educate the worker through practical action, whilst strikes developed solidarity and awakened the antagonism between workers' interests and those of the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, as strikes spread, so do organisation and links between workers' groups.<sup>33</sup>

Of the Bakuninist federations of the International, Spain was the most solidly syndicalist. The Spanish Federation developed a system of unions crowned by a Federal Council; at least in theory, power was exercised from the bottom up, with no paid officials or hierarchy and unions not bound to decisions taken at regional or national level.<sup>34</sup> The Council was however was anxious to avoid premature conflict and according to Temma Kaplan, actually served to discourage strikes by bureaucratic means, although larger unions tended to strike whenever they felt they had some leverage over employers.<sup>35</sup> In Switzerland successful strikes between 1869-1873 led to a sort of revolutionary syndicalism among Bakunin's supporters, and the idea of a decentralised federation of unions. By 1873, both the Jura Federation and the Belgian Federation were more "syndicalist" than "Bakuninist", and supported the idea of the General Strike.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless there was some caution that strikes should not be fixed for a particular day and hour but should be spontaneous and contagious. While some, like the Italian Andrea Costa, were dubious about the reformist potential of partial strikes for better wages and hours, others, like James Guillaume, looked to the positive effects of real

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<sup>32</sup> Braunthal *History of the International* v.1 p.134

<sup>33</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.215

<sup>34</sup> G.R. Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology and the Working Class Movement in Spain 1868-1898* Berkeley 1989 p.21

<sup>35</sup> T. Kaplan *Anarchists of Andalusia 1868-1903* Princeton 1977 p.83

<sup>36</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* pp.221-2

economic change effected by the direct initiative of the workers, and to the logic of short-term gains made in partial strikes demonstrating to workers the need to intensify and generalise the struggle, culminating in a General Strike.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless by the mid-1870s this enthusiasm for the syndicalist approach was waning amongst militants in Spain and the Jura, whilst the Italian Federation had never had much time for unionism, which Errico Malatesta claimed was not suited to economic conditions in Italy, or to the Italian temperament.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile in Spain the repressions following the Cantonalist risings of 1873 and the outlawing of the International in 1874 encouraged leading militants to abandon the idea of an open labour organisation and to look for new tactics. These two countries led the way in adopting insurrection as the means to achieve the social revolution.

In rejecting participation in conventional politics and collaboration with bourgeois radicals, anarchists advocated a policy of action by workers and peasants themselves, without mediation or representation. This was embodied in the preamble to the statutes of the International; the emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves. The mutualists, following Proudhon, interpreted this as setting up their own mutual aid, direct exchange and credit institutions to escape the control of capital; syndicalists as the assertion of worker power through strikes, ultimately bringing down capitalism by a General Strike. As the influence of Bakuninism grew in the IWA however, the focus shifted to acts of revolt and insurrection. Assisted by revolutionaries, the workers and peasants should, according to Bakunin, seize by force the land and means of production and put them into common ownership, working them for their own benefit. Such actions, even if defeated, would serve as an example and inspiration to other workers' organisations, by demonstrating *in fact* what was meant by socialism. Bakunin noted in his 1870 *Letters to a Frenchman* that "deeds are the most popular, powerful and irresistible form of propaganda."<sup>39</sup> However effective

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<sup>37</sup> J. Guillaume *L'Internationale: Documents et Souvenirs* (4 vols. in 2) New York 1969 pt.5 p.117

<sup>38</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.229

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.76

written and spoken propaganda may be, putting ideas into practice was the best way for anarchists to win popular support. As we have seen Bakunin, speaking to the Russian populist V. Debagorii-Mokrievich in 1874, said that the anarchists did not expect an immediate successful revolution, but "we must make unceasing revolutionary attempts, even if we are beaten...one, two, ten, even twenty times; but if on the twenty-first time the people support us by taking part in our revolution, we shall have been paid for all the sacrifices."<sup>40</sup> This idea was the basis of what later became known as propaganda by deed, as we shall see below.

### 3-4: Spain

The International in Spain had been influenced by Bakuninist ideas from its inception. Following the 1868 revolution which overthrew the monarchy, Bakunin had sent emissaries to Spain, including the Italian Giuseppe Fanelli, who despite his inability to speak Spanish, succeeded in laying the foundations for the Spanish International. Within a year there were 2000 members and an organisation; furthermore, Spain's delegates to the Basle congress of 1869, Rafael Farga Pellicer and Gaspar Sentinon, joined Bakunin's Alliance and returned to set up a branch in Spain.<sup>41</sup> Thus by June 1870, when the inaugural congress of the *Federación Regional Espanola* was held with delegates representing 40,000 workers,<sup>42</sup> the Bakuninists had achieved the organisational form they desired: a federation of independent producer groups, within which existed a clandestine network of anarchists ready to co-ordinate revolutionary action.

Between 1869 and 1874 workers began to move away from the radical middle-class Federal Republicans, who had had strong worker support during the revolution, and towards a formulation of their own policy. Disillusion with politics assisted this process; efforts to bring about permanent political change seemed to have been to no avail, with the hated military conscription still in place and the repeated use of force to quell protest.<sup>43</sup> The right of

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<sup>40</sup> N. Pernicone *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* Princeton 1993, p.84

<sup>41</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.18

<sup>42</sup> Kaplan *Anarchists* p.75

<sup>43</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.27



association had been suppressed in the wake of the Paris Commune; the Commune also had the effect of inflating the reputation of the International, with which it was popularly associated. The Federal Council disbanded itself, anticipating a crackdown; as tensions mounted and strikes increased, the Internationalists took the opportunity for revolutionary propaganda, leading to an identification of the FRE with strike action. Meanwhile the repression of the Paris Commune sharpened the rhetoric against any sort of alliance with the middle classes.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the increasing strength of the International in Spain, the Federal Commission failed to lead a revolt when the Republic was again declared in 1873 and the Cantonal rebellions broke out; they did not hope for a successful revolution as yet and left local groups to decide their role in the social revolt. In the town of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, the hungry winter of 1872-3 aroused ruling class fears of revolt, and raids on workers' organisations.<sup>45</sup> In response anarchists planned a general strike to depose the city council; however its leaders were arrested, and the International was proscribed there. Andalusian anarchists persisted with their strike tactic however, capitalising on good harvests in 1873 to demand the abolition of piece rates for agricultural workers. Attempts to prevent scab labour from collecting the harvest led to a riot and troops being called. A general strike broke out in the town of Alcoy, at which troops fired on the strikers. This resulted in a full-scale revolt and the seizure of the town by the workers.<sup>46</sup> In the town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, the local anarchists led an insurrection, imprisoning the police and destroying property and tax records. The FRE remained in control of the town for a month, and even after its defeat by government troops, the insurrection, and other similar actions involving the anarchists, stood as a beacon ensuring popular support in the region, to the detriment of republicans, and encouraging the insurrectionist tactic for its inspirational and propaganda value.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the fact that most of the

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<sup>44</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* pp.31-3

<sup>45</sup> Kaplan *Anarchists* p.103

<sup>46</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.5 p.86

<sup>47</sup> Kaplan *Anarchists* p.110

Cantonalist risings were directed not by workers' organisations but by military or political leaders, who were often as hostile to socialism as the government in Madrid, must have sharpened the Internationalists' stance against political revolution and collaboration with bourgeois radicals.<sup>48</sup>

As we noted above, the Spanish FRE had relied mainly on strikes in the early 1870s, and its Federal Commission hoped to use information gathering to determine the best moment to call strikes, although in practice this rarely took place.<sup>49</sup> The mood of insurrectionism grew in the atmosphere of repression which followed the cantonalist risings of 1873. Strikes of course required a strong union or syndicate organisation, which was not possible when repressions set in. A legal requirement to submit membership lists of unions led many workers to keep their organisations secret. The International was proscribed in Spain in 1874 and in conditions of repression the Federal Commission opted for insurrectionary tactics over strikes, advising local anarchist sections to organise action groups, to obtain arms and to carry out reprisals against capitalists and oppressors. However some areas, including Andalusia, held to their earlier unions and continued to strike despite the illegality of their organisations.<sup>50</sup>

Under repression the FRE underwent organisational change. The Federal Council and hundreds of other militants were in prison or exile. Local anarchist groups became secret associations. At the Geneva congress of the Anti-authoritarian International in 1873, Spanish leaders, along with others, had abandoned the general strike in favour of insurrection as their main tactic; however the Andalusians questioned the right of the Council to dictate tactics, and it was agreed that locals were not bound to congress decisions.<sup>51</sup> However when the underground movement refused to act in concert, this left much ideological power with the Federal Commission (as the Federal Council was now known), which was dominated by Vinas, Tomas Morago and Francisco Tomás. These militants advised workers to seize the granaries as

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<sup>48</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.5 pp.87-88

<sup>49</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.52

<sup>50</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.119

<sup>51</sup> Kaplan *Anarchists* p.113

bread riots, food seizures and arson spread, to gather arms and manufacture ammunition, and to destroy property and records.<sup>52</sup> Insurrection provided a means of direct action which did not rely on unions, and seemed the only means of pursuing revolutionary aims. Some anarchists in Spain and elsewhere feared that strikes were becoming increasingly reformist, and sought to broaden their activity, giving primacy to revolutionary propaganda to animate an insurrectionary movement. In this, as George Esenwein points out, they failed to visualise how to combine strikes with other revolutionary acts.<sup>53</sup>

### 3-5: Italy

As in Spain, the International in Italy was more or less Bakuninist from the beginning, and as we have seen in Chapter 1, Bakunin was as instrumental in founding Italian socialism as the Italians were in shaping Bakunin's anarchism. With the demise of Mazzinianism and of Garibaldi's influence, as well as Marx' and Engels' failure to bring statist socialism to Italy, Bakuninism became the dominant revolutionary ideology in Italy in the early 1870s.<sup>54</sup> As in Spain, the Paris Commune caused a sensation, and greatly increased the prestige of the International there.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Mazzini's condemnation of the Commune alienated many enthusiastic Republicans, and Bakunin took advantage of this, writing *The Political Theology of Mazzini, and the International*.<sup>56</sup> Mazzini's criticism of the International for its programme of federalism, atheism and anti-politicism, which was in fact Bakunin's programme and not that of the International as a whole, led those who rejected Mazzini to associate the International with Bakuninism rather than Marxism.<sup>57</sup> By the Spring of 1872, there were 50 sections of the International in Italy, half of which were in Emilia-Romagna and the Marches. Carlo Cafiero, the only representative of the General Council in Italy, went

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<sup>52</sup> Kaplan *Anarchists* p.116

<sup>53</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.58

<sup>54</sup> One problem for Marx and Engels was the choice by Engels of Carlo Cafiero as their correspondent in Italy; by late 1871 the latter had gone over to the anarchists, apparently discouraged by Engels' attempts to indoctrinate him and to slander Bakunin. Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt. 3-4 p.252

<sup>55</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.36

<sup>56</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt. 3-4 p.253

<sup>57</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.37

over to the Bakuninists and along with Alberto Tucci and Errico Malatesta set about organising a national congress.<sup>58</sup> When this took place, in August 1872, it put the Italian Federation strongly behind Bakunin. The conference created no central bodies apart from a correspondence and statistics commission; it also broke with the General Council and boycotted the Hague congress. The Italians also constituted a section of the secret Alliance, again attempting to create the classic Bakuninist organisational form of a broad, federal organisation linked by a network of revolutionaries. Discussing strikes, the congress declared that while they were of little use in improving the workers' economic position, they were important in developing solidarity; in other words they were of an educative value. This of course is a similar attitude to that taken by the young Russian Bakuninists in Geneva (Ralli et al.) and by Kropotkin in his manifesto for the Chaikovskii circle.

Repressions began in short order. Alarmed by the rapid growth of the International in Italy, and by the numerous strikes and demonstrations in 1872 and '73, the government disrupted the second national congress of the Italian Federation in March 1873. Nevertheless, in spite of the arrests of numerous leaders, including Cafiero, Malatesta and Andrea Costa, the conference went ahead anyway, with 11 regional federations represented.<sup>59</sup> This congress crystallised the Italians' adherence to the St. Imier International and rejected the resolutions of the Hague congress, emphasising the principles of anti-politicism, opposition to class collaboration and embracing atheism, materialism, anarchism, federalism and collectivism.<sup>60</sup> On the subject of strikes, the congress declared that these were useful only as a precursor to insurrection, and called for a revolutionary alliance of workers and peasants.<sup>61</sup> The "highest duty" of revolutionary workers was propaganda in the countryside.<sup>62</sup> It was recommended that sections organise according to job category into craft and trade unions, but while the International as a whole

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<sup>58</sup> T. Ravindranathan *Bakunin and the Italians* Kingston/Montreal 1988 p.174

<sup>59</sup> Ravindranathan *Bakunin* p.86

<sup>60</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.5 p.66

<sup>61</sup> Ravindranathan *Bakunin* p.187, Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* pp.72-3

<sup>62</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.73

had endorsed strikes at St. Imier, the Italians remained uncommitted, recommending "all forms of resistance".<sup>63</sup>

Throughout 1873, Andrea Costa criss-crossed Italy, forming new sections and successfully preaching anarchism. The stronghold of Italian anarchism was the north central region, especially Tuscany. However anarchist International sections were also strong in Rome, Milan, Turin, Bologna, Palermo, Genoa, Venice and numerous medium and small towns.<sup>64</sup> The great majority of members were salaried workers and artisans. Despite the desire of leaders to organise the peasants, these remained the least represented class in the Italian International. In contrast to Spain, there was limited support from casual and seasonal agricultural workers. Pernicone suggests several reasons for this; firstly the displacement of small proprietors was only just beginning in Italy and many peasants had yet to feel the full force of rural capitalism; secondly, in contrast to Spain, Italian agriculture was concentrated in a region where there was virtually no industry, that is to say the south, and interaction between peasants and workers was consequently limited. Thirdly, anarchists failed to carry out a concerted campaign of organisation in the south.<sup>65</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, however, contradicts this last point by claiming that Italian Bakuninists made "strenuous efforts" in the south, but met with indifferent results.<sup>66</sup> It may be that the anarchists hoped to draw peasants into the struggle by fomenting an insurrection, which is what they attempted to do in 1874.

In many ways an insurrection in 1874 was not an unrealistic proposition. Italy was undergoing an economic crisis, strikes, demonstrations and riots were spreading, and in many cities crowds had attacked bakeries and grain merchants, bread shops and wheat cargoes. The government's finances were at breaking point and emergency fiscal policy had hit the poor hardest. According to Ravindranathan, Costa and Cafiero assumed that an

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<sup>63</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.73

<sup>64</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.76

<sup>65</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* pp.79-81

<sup>66</sup> E. Hobsbawm *Primitive Rebels* Manchester 1959 p.93

uprising was inevitable; the poor had no other recourse against the state.<sup>67</sup> Pernicone puts it slightly differently; the anarchists had to show themselves to be worthy heirs to the revolutionary traditions of the Risorgimento; they had to rebel in sympathy with the popular upheavals or risk losing support.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, as Costa put it, they wanted to use the opportunity to "give a practical example that would demonstrate to the people what we wanted and to propagate our ideas with evidence of deeds."<sup>69</sup>

Bakunin felt that Italy was ripe for social revolution because of the predominance there of the "proletariat in rags", and the lack of an aristocracy of labour in the form of well-paid, semi-bourgeois workers.<sup>70</sup> What the Italians did not have however, and which Bakunin saw as a necessity, was a strong organisation which could link peasant and worker protest into a full-scale rising. Malatesta later admitted the naiveté of believing that merely giving an example would spur the masses to revolution.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless preparations went ahead, and the first bulletin of the Committee for the Social Revolution which was to organise the insurrection proclaimed that pacific propaganda of revolutionary ideas had had its day; the clamorous and solemn propaganda of insurrection and barricades must replace it.<sup>72</sup> This, as we shall see, is a precursor to the concept of "propaganda by deed", as well as a reflection of Bakunin's call in his *Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis* of 1870 to spread anarchist principles "not with words but with deed, for this is the most popular, the most potent and the most irresistible form of propaganda."<sup>73</sup>

Forced underground by repression, the Italian Federation tried to turn itself into a clandestine organisation which would answer a call to arms. Requests for support from the International were denied; the International as a whole remained unenthusiastic about insurrections, and asked for a report on the strength of the Italian International and the aims of the insurrection; they continued to urge the use of the general strike. The Italians pressed

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<sup>67</sup> Ravindranathan *Bakunin* p.189

<sup>68</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.84

<sup>69</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.185

<sup>70</sup> M. Bakunin "Statism and Anarchy" in S. Dolgoff (ed.) *Bakunin on Anarchy* London 1973 p.334

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.84

<sup>72</sup> "Bulletin no.1" quoted in Ravindranathan *Bakunin* p.190

ahead alone, with the active support of Bakunin who came out of retirement (and a row with Cafiero over the premises he had bought for Bakunin) to take part and die on the barricades. The insurrection went wrong from the start however; potential republican support was stifled by the arrest of their leaders, and on the night of the 6th August when the insurrection was due to begin in Bologna, lack of co-ordination, poor turnout and swift police action prevented the rising. Police action also forestalled the revolts planned for Florence, Rome, Pisa and Sicily. The only tangible result of the insurrection was the suppression of hundreds of Republican and Internationalist societies.<sup>74</sup>

As Pernicone points out, the action was deprived of leadership by the arrest of Costa and the squabbling between Bakunin and Cafiero; swift police action resulted in a hastily improvised plan being put together to try to save the insurrection; and furthermore, it was not in conformity with Bakunin's ideas on revolution in that it lacked the necessary organisation and preparation or the simultaneous action of people in the countryside and the towns. There was no organic connection with peasant unrest, and in fact the enterprise had more in common with Mazzinian risings than Bakunin's ideas.<sup>75</sup>

For the next two years the activity of the Italian Federation was severely limited. However its reputation was enhanced by the trials of the insurrectionists. Several cases were badly handled by the prosecution, and many of the accused were released for lack of evidence. As was to happen in Russia, the defendants used their trials effectively to win the sympathy of the public, making speeches and publicising police brutality, forced confessions and spying. All 79 of those accused of the Bologna attempt were found not guilty, although as Malatesta said, this had more to do with the naiveté of the bourgeois jurors as regards revolutionary socialism, and sympathy for any

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<sup>73</sup> M. Bakunin "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis" in Dolgoff *Bakunin* pp.195-6

<sup>74</sup> Ravindranathan *Bakunin* pp.204-209

<sup>75</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* pp.91-92. See also Bakunin's "Letters to a Frenchman..." in which, a few lines after the passage on the propaganda of principles by deeds, he states that the first such deed is to foster the self-organisation of the masses into a federation, by winning the co-operation of intelligent and dedicated individuals in each locality. Dolgoff *Bakunin* p.196

enemy of the government, than with sympathy for the insurrectionists' cause.<sup>76</sup>

To sum up, the early 1870s marked the beginning of a series of changes in revolutionary tactics in the anarchist movement, within the International and the subsequent Anti-authoritarian International. Spain and Italy led the way in this shift from syndicalist tactics, of an organisation based in workers' groups and hoping to bring about a General Strike, to insurrectionism. There were various reasons for this shift, the first being the need, in the light of the splitting of the International, to mark out a position separate from authoritarian and legal socialists. Furthermore, in countries such as Spain and Italy a tactic was needed which brought in the peasants as well as urban workers. However while anarchists succeeded in doing this in Spain, they failed to do so in Italy, a fact which can be at least partially explained by the Italians' failure to put sufficient effort into organising the peasants and adapt to peasant traditions and the rhythm of peasant protest, which depended on factors such as season, the agricultural cycle, weather, and the success or failure of harvests. As Pernicone states, the Italians' attempted insurrection in 1874 owed more to the traditions of Mazzini and Garibaldi than to peasant traditions; indeed, largely thanks to Bakunin's organising efforts in the 1860s, Italy's anarchists had assumed the mantle of these two veterans and despite differing aims, looked to their tradition for tactical inspiration.

A further factor in the adoption of insurrection was government repression. In Spain and Italy political instability and widespread popular unrest had led the government to suppress workers' organisations. The impossibility of open organisation obviously made strikes very difficult, and a clandestine organisation to foment insurrection must have seemed like the only available option in such conditions. Also, there was a fear of the reformist potential of strikes, that they could lead workers away from revolutionary ideas onto a path of demands for small concessions. Finally, and significantly, there was the embryonic idea of propaganda by deed. As we have seen, the

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<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.105



idea that anarchists must proclaim their aims by actions was pronounced by Costa in the Bulletin of the Committee for Social Revolution, echoing Bakunin. It was to be the Italians who introduced the concept of propaganda by deed to the Anti-authoritarian International in the form of insurrectionism, where, as we shall see, it gained support and came to be reinterpreted as the anarchist movement began to decline and splinter.

#### **4: Propaganda by Deed**

##### **4-1: Italy and Insurrection**

The Italian movement had regrouped by 1876; this was largely due to the tireless efforts of Andrea Costa. A regional congress of the Romagnole-Emilian federation reaffirmed its principles as anarchism, collectivism, and rejection of political struggle in favour of insurrectionism. The Tuscan federation, on the other hand, with more workers among the leadership, took a more syndicalist line, advocating unions, resistance societies and strikes. According to Pernicone, the Italian International soon regained and even surpassed its pre-1874 strength; it remained predominantly working-class, although it now showed an increase in participation by working-class women and an awareness of women's issues. The Romagnole-Emilian Federation called for the free union of men and women, economic independence for women, and equal rights and responsibilities, while the Florence women's section called not for "bourgeois emancipation" but "human emancipation".<sup>77</sup>

As in Spain there were regional tensions in Italy between syndicalists in the Marches and Umbria who preferred the strike as a revolutionary tactic, and the insurrectionists who drew their support from the Romagnole-Emilian Federation of the Italian International. For the time being however, the debates on syndicalism/insurrectionism were overshadowed in the International by the debate on propaganda by deed, which, however, grew out of Italian insurrectionism.

It was the Italian Federation which introduced the concept of propaganda by deed to the International at the Bern Congress of 1876. What Malatesta and his comrades understood by the phrase at this time was

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<sup>77</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* pp.108-9

insurrection by workers and peasants to seize land and means of production. In a public statement Malatesta and Cafiero pronounced that:

The insurrectionary deed, destined to affirm socialist principles by means of action, is the most effective means of propaganda, and the only one which...can penetrate into the deepest social strata and draw the living forces of humanity into the struggle sustained by the International.<sup>78</sup>

The Italians were drawing on Bakunin's ideas and the native Italian traditions of insurrection and guerrilla warfare (Mazzini and Garibaldi) to arrive at their concept of propaganda by deed. Moreover they knew that a few poorly armed peasants could not win any immediate struggles but they hoped to make acts of propaganda and provocation which would find echoes in the population. Oral and written propaganda alone were not enough; to explain socialism to the workers and peasants it was necessary to demonstrate it by deeds, so that they could see<sup>3</sup> and feel what society could be like if the government and property owners were removed.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the predominance of workers and artisans in the Italian Federation of the International,<sup>80</sup> its leaders shared Bakunin's belief that the peasants' active support was necessary to carry through the revolution. Moreover not only were some sections of the urban workforce subject to the debilitating effects of bourgeois culture, some had enough security and good enough wages to make them think twice about risking revolutionary action. Only the very poorest with the least to lose could be relied upon to take such risks, and in many countries this meant the peasants. Thus the next site they chose for an insurrectionary attempt was in the Matese mountains, in Benevento province, where there had been fierce peasant resistance to Piedmont troops following the Unification. Andrea Costa was not keen on the plan, believing that the timing was wrong, and the supposed insurgents

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<sup>78</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt. 6 p.114

<sup>79</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.6 p.116

<sup>80</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* 6 p.118

existed only in the imagination of the anarchists.<sup>81</sup> This time the plan was not to seize a city but for an armed band, led by the Russian Sergei Kravchinskii, to roam the countryside preaching class war and social brigandage, to occupy small towns and leave after accomplishing whatever revolutionary deeds they could, leaving the peasants to take charge. Again however the authorities were aware in advance of the plan, thanks to a traitor.<sup>82</sup> However, they allowed the insurrection to proceed in order to justify harsh repressions.<sup>83</sup> The anarchists, aware that they had been found out and fearing an attack by troops, felt forced to make their move a month earlier than planned, in April, when the weather in the mountains was still extremely unfavourable. A small band, poorly armed and undermanned, set off into the mountains; meanwhile all the larger towns of the region were heavily occupied by government forces. The band occupied the small town of Letino, declared the king deposed and burned tax and other records. They tried to explain the meaning of the social revolution to the crowd, exhorting them to take action for themselves. They then moved on to the next town, where again documentation was burned and the counting devices for the much-hated milling tax were broken. Although the peasants applauded these gestures, suspicion and fear neutralised any revolutionary instinct. The band of insurrectionists, hemmed in by troops, were reduced to wandering the mountains until cold, hunger, rain and snow forced them to surrender. However, on top of all these practical problems, Hobsbawm is probably right to assert that the insurrection attempt was not geared to the rhythm of peasant discontent.<sup>84</sup>

The anarchists had failed to provoke a rising once again; nevertheless, in capturing national attention for several weeks, the insurrectionists drew notice to the International and to socialism, and according to N. Pernicone, enhanced anarchism rather than diminishing it for some workers. At any rate the Italian Federation acquired many new members over the next year and a

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<sup>81</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.120

<sup>82</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.6 p.182

<sup>83</sup> Ravindranathan *Bakunin* p.227

<sup>84</sup> Hobsbawm *Primitive Rebels* p.94

half in spite of repression, and the anarchists became certain that in order to retain their credibility before the workers and peasants, another action was necessary, indicating that radical tactics had widespread support.<sup>85</sup> The policy of insurrectionism was retained; the heritage of Bakunin and the Risorgimento was not to be abandoned after two setbacks. Furthermore, the anarchists asked, if an insurrection was an impossibility, why had the government sent 12,000 troops to Benevento against 26 poorly armed revolutionaries?<sup>86</sup> In spite of government persecution over the next few years, the trend in the Italian Federation was to expansion rather than contraction, indicating perhaps that while insurrectionism was discredited for socialist intellectuals, it was not for Italian workers.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4-2: Propaganda by Deed in the Anti-authoritarian International

Despite the failure of the Benevento rising, it served to give impetus to the acceptance of propaganda by deed. Particularly enthusiastic was Paul Brousse, editor of *L'Avant-garde*. Brousse's interpretation of propaganda by deed however was broader than that of the Italians, and included such actions as demonstrations, and later even the destructivist vote (the election of illegal candidates) as propaganda methods.<sup>88</sup> The importance of this broader interpretation should be noted; insurrection involved the *acting out of socialist aims* by seizing the means of production and driving out the authorities, while other tactics served only to *attract attention* to the movement. Accepting this interpretation of propaganda by deed could feasibly (although not necessarily) open the way to small-group and individual acts, i.e. terrorism.

Economic crisis in the watchmaking industry in Switzerland, traditionally the basis of support for the Jura Federation, was in the mid-1870s resulting in a loss, rather than gain, of support for the anarchists. Paul Brousse felt that effective propaganda was necessary to clarify ideas and principles to the masses, and to show the means and ends of revolutionary

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<sup>85</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.141

<sup>86</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.128

<sup>87</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.140

<sup>88</sup> "La propagande par le fait" in *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* 5 aout 1877 pp.1-2

action.<sup>89</sup> He was drawn to Malatesta and Cafiero's definition of insurrection as propaganda, and his *Arbeiter Zeitung* recommended propaganda by deed and action, although as we have seen he interpreted action more broadly than did the Italians.

Given the unlikelihood of fomenting an insurrection in Switzerland, and inspired by a demonstration in St. Petersburg in December 1876, Brousse proposed a workers' demonstration at Bern. He was joined in this by Kropotkin, who saw the need for some inspiring act to get the masses on the move.<sup>90</sup> Moderates like James Guillaume were less enthusiastic, the latter claiming that Brousse's Bern section was preoccupied with a "make-believe" demonstration, and that the risk of bloodshed was not worthwhile for a mere demonstration.<sup>91</sup> However, differences soon became apparent between Brousse and Kropotkin. Brousse later declared that the purpose of the demonstration was to show the workers that they had no right to demonstrate in "free" Switzerland, where the display of the red flag was forbidden. Kropotkin on the other hand had wanted to show that "at least here and there the workers would not have their rights trampled underfoot and would offer resistance."<sup>92</sup> Kropotkin clearly hoped for a serious confrontation with authority, and in fact tried to procure guns for the event. A few months later he took part in a smaller demonstration to which he and others came armed and ready to fire on the police had violence broken out.<sup>93</sup> The important point to note is not the desire for violence however, but the desire for a genuine act of revolt. For Kropotkin the idea of a dramatic gesture with the aim merely of making propaganda, which Brousse seemed to support, was pointless. Revolutionary action had by its very nature a propaganda effect, but actions should be carried out, he claimed, with the primary aim of attacking the current oppressive social, political and economic system. An act of social revolt was by its nature inspiring to the oppressed and exploited and this was what Kropotkin meant by propaganda by deed. While Kropotkin hoped for a

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<sup>89</sup> D. Stafford *From Anarchism to Reformism* London 1971 p.78

<sup>90</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.99

<sup>91</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.6 p.162

<sup>92</sup> Kropotkin *Memoirs* p.397

skirmish in the social revolution from the demonstration, essentially maintaining the insurrectionist position put forward by the Italians, Brousse, it would seem, was advocating a more "political" act; these differing interpretations reflect the social/political revolution debate, and a political interpretation of propaganda by deed could obviously include terrorism and assassination. Therefore while Kropotkin's line in this particular case favours a greater degree of violence, in fact it is Brousse's more political interpretation of propaganda by deed that feeds into the later terrorist wave in anarchism. Kropotkin advocated a policy of action as well as spoken and written propaganda; for the time being however this meant collective action and insurrection, although subsequent events were to focus the attention of Kropotkin and other anarchists on small-group and individual acts of revolt.

Brousse saw the demonstration in St. Petersburg in 1876 as propaganda by deed;<sup>94</sup> the demonstration in Bern was similarly conceived by him as an act of pure propaganda, not a revolutionary attempt, as was the insurrectionary attempt of the Italians in Benevento in 1877.<sup>95</sup> In the Bulletin of the Jura Federation, he wrote that the participants in these acts had not expected a revolution.<sup>96</sup> In burning property archives, they had shown the peasants what attitude should be taken to private property. If it was possible for such an action to accomplish collectivisation and put the means of production in the hands of the workers, so much the better; even if the workers are subsequently attacked and beaten, the idea has been set out in flesh and blood before the people.<sup>97</sup> For David Stafford, this sums up Brousse's lack of faith in the revolutionary nature of the people. If a tactic was tried and succeeded, all well and good; if it failed, it was "propaganda by deed".<sup>98</sup> Unlike Malatesta and Cafiero in Italy, and Kropotkin in Switzerland, Brousse was not advocating acts of popular revolt but was hoping merely to spread ideas; for the Italians, and for Kropotkin, it was only the genuine

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<sup>93</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.102

<sup>94</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.82

<sup>95</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.6 p.225

<sup>96</sup> *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* 5 aout 1877 p.2

<sup>97</sup> *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* 5 aout 1877 p.2

<sup>98</sup> Stafford *From Anarchism* p.87

attempt at revolution which, even in defeat, could propagandise anarchism. Dramatic gestures, of the type envisaged by Brousse, were only a game unless they were inspired by the genuine spirit of revolt.

## **5: The Growth of Terrorism**

### **5-1: Anarchists and Attentats**

From 1878 a series of terrorist acts in Europe and Russia, including a number of regicide attempts, helped to turn the anarchists' attention to such deeds. Although not organised by the anarchist movement, the regicide attempts were greeted with approval by anarchists; however the anarchist journals did not classify them as "propaganda by deed".<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless the sensation caused by Hoedal's and Nobiling's attempts on the life of the German emperor, Passanante's knife attack on the king of Italy, and Moncasi's attempt on the king of Spain, as well as the fear they generated among the ruling classes of Europe, were among the factors influencing anarchists to look to terrorist tactics.<sup>100</sup> The reaction to Vera Zasulich's attempt on the life of Governor Trepov was enthusiastic and she was invited by anarchists to Paris to a heroine's welcome, to write articles against the social democrats. She refused; she herself had not expected her act to have any popular impact, it was not intended as "propaganda by deed". Kropotkin agreed, seeing it as merely answering violence with violence.<sup>101</sup> He continued to espouse a primarily collective view of action, although he now began to attach importance to the individual act of revolt as a precursor to revolution.

In Italy, demonstrations celebrating king Umberto's survival of Passanante's attack were disrupted by bomb attacks. Needless to say the authorities blamed the International, and arrests, detentions and exile brought the Italian Federation to a halt as a widespread organisation.<sup>102</sup> Across Europe, repressions helped to cut the anarchists off from the masses. Carlo Cafiero now urged anarchists to organise in secret for immediate violent

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<sup>99</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.63

<sup>100</sup> Brousse regarded the assassination attempts as acts of Republican, but not socialist propaganda.

"Hoedal, Nobiling et la Propagande par le Fait" in *L'Avant-garde* 17 juin 1878 pp.1-2

<sup>101</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.109

action; the notion that a public organisation led to persecution became widespread. In Spain meanwhile, growing militancy of local sections left the FRE unable to control them. The inability of the FRE to resist the repressions or to organise actions led many workers to abandon it, leaving anarchist militants with a greater say in the affairs of the organisation. With the policy of insurrection becoming harder to sustain, organisation became secret, and cells in Andalusia, Catalonia and Madrid took it upon themselves to combat the enemy "by whatever means possible".<sup>103</sup> By 1880 Kropotkin too was paying attention to individual and small group acts. He was impressed by the panic induced by the Russian terrorists, but seems to have hoped they were preparing a popular revolt as well.<sup>104</sup> He continued to look for acts which were economically based and more spontaneous, such as the burning of plantations and factories in Spain, riots and arson in Italy and the "economic terror" practised by some of the Russian *Zemlevol'tsy*. However Johann Most, recently converted from social democracy, advocated a policy of terrorism in his journal *Die Freiheit*, while Jean Grave, speaking of elections, said that the money spent on electing deputies would be better spent on dynamite to blow them up.

Paul Brousse had by 1878 abandoned any sympathy with insurrectionary tactics as unfeasible, and urged other forms of propaganda including voting anarchists into local commune government, where they could declare land and means of production common property; the reaction from the state to this would serve as propaganda by showing the people who and what the state really stood for.<sup>105</sup> He was enthusiastic about the attentats, which he called propaganda by deed, although more republican than socialist. When Hoedal and Nobiling tried to kill the Emperor, far more than any pamphlet or brochure their actions put the question of an end to monarchism at the top of the agenda, forcing everyone to discuss it and take sides for or

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<sup>102</sup> Paola Feri has apparently argued that the bombs were in fact the work of the police to excite fear and support for repression among the middle classes. "Il movimento anarchico in Italia", *Il Trimestre* 11, nos. 1-3, 1978; quoted in Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.149

<sup>103</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.71

<sup>104</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.133

<sup>105</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p. 85



against.<sup>106</sup> Thus the idea of individual terror came to be drawn into the orbit of propaganda by deed; to some, apparently, practically any act had propaganda value, even if it was not obviously connected with social and economic, as opposed to political, revolution.

Among the causes of the growing support for terrorism within anarchism were the impossibility of organising mass actions in the face of what was by now severe repression, increasing isolation from the masses, angry reprisals against persecution, and, connected with the above, a growing "anti-organisation" trend, which Max Nettlau calls "amorphousness".<sup>107</sup> Believing that mass organisations like the International were unfeasible, growing numbers of anarchists were calling for completely autonomous cells of revolutionaries taking whatever form of action they deemed necessary. As Pernicone writes, many anarchists were guilty of lumping together organisation and authority, and tried to elevate isolation and lack of solidarity into a principle, as if it were a function of anarchism rather than its negation.<sup>108</sup> This of course only compounded the anarchists' isolation from the masses. The Spaniard Morago saw the idea of propaganda by deed as a battle such as the Russian terrorists were waging; if a general revolution were not possible, it was necessary to combat the enemy by whatever means possible. Cafiero called for "permanent revolt by the word, in writing, by the dagger, the rifle, dynamite, sometimes even the ballot [meaning illegal candidatures]...everything is good for us that is not legal."<sup>109</sup> Johann Most called for the destruction of communications, dynamiting of homes, offices, churches, stores and factories.<sup>110</sup> As the International declined in the late 1870s, autonomous groups espousing guerrilla warfare and terror became widespread. By 1880-81, terrorism as a revolutionary strategy, rather than a retaliatory measure, had become common in the anarchist movement, although by no means advocated by all anarchists. Furthermore, it had now

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<sup>106</sup> "Hoedal, Nobiling et la Propagande par le Fait" in *L'Avant-garde* 17 juin 1878 p.1

<sup>107</sup> M. Nettlau *A Short History of Anarchism* London 1996 p.151

<sup>108</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.177

<sup>109</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.187

taken over as the dominant interpretation of propaganda by deed, especially in the minds of governments and the public.

The other major factor in influencing the anarchists' turn to terror was the dramatic actions of Russia's *Narodnaya volya*. The assassination of Alexander II exhilarated the anarchists and encouraged the view that the revolution could be stimulated by terrorism. In fact however this view was based on what certain anarchists wanted to see, rather than what was actually happening in Russia. It was reported that the cry of "Down with the exploiters!" was reverberating throughout Russia. Carlo Cafiero thought that the success of the act proved the efficacy of small, autonomous cells with no central organisation or leadership, because that was how he thought *Narodnaya volya* was organised.<sup>111</sup> "No more centres, no more general plans. Let each man in his own locality seek to form a group...and pledge action without fail" he wrote.<sup>112</sup> Kropotkin took a more sober view; while he saw the assassination as a blow against autocracy and greeted it with enthusiasm, he was disturbed by the political nature of Russian terrorism, and his writings on the subject stress the populist inclinations of Perovskaya et al.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile articles by others appeared in *Le Révolté* trying to identify the anarchist movement with *Narodnaya volya* and to give an anarchist interpretation to their efforts.

## 5-2: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Tactics

Kropotkin claimed never to have liked the notion of propaganda by deed, although he supported the forms it was given by its early advocates.<sup>114</sup> We have seen from his manifesto for the Chaikovtsy that he supported the idea of creating armed peasant bands and involvement in local revolts. His response to the demonstration at Bern which he helped to organise was positive: he felt that the courage of the workers in fighting the police had won people over. He also wrote that the Chicago rail strikes of 1877, which had

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<sup>110</sup> A. Carlson "Anarchism and Individual Terror in the German Empire 1870-90" p.188 in W. Mommsen/G. Hirschfeld (eds) *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe* London 1982 p.188

<sup>111</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.189

<sup>112</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.190

<sup>113</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.143

taken on a violent character, could have been transformed into an insurrection which, even if defeated, could have propagandised the idea of popular expropriation.<sup>115</sup> Clearly then Kropotkin had some sympathy for the idea of propaganda by deed when expressed as insurrection. He was enthused by his visit to Spain in 1878, where he found a network of revolutionaries operating within a population which, especially in rural areas, was prone to insurrection.

However, possibly as a result of his time in Spain, where he tried to reconcile the collectivists of Barcelona with the Madrid groups who favoured terrorism, his researches into the French revolution, and the attentats in Europe, his views on revolutionary action were expanding.<sup>116</sup> He was coming to see a proliferation of collective and individual acts as a precursor to revolution. Nevertheless the insistence remained that these were genuine acts of revolt; outraged individuals made an attack on a viper whom they hated, not a calculated attempt at propaganda by dramatic gesture. Kropotkin continued to support the awakening of the popular spirit of revolt by theoretical propaganda and insurrectional acts. He sympathised with the attentats but made no case for individual acts as yet. In 1879, *Le Révolté* remained more preoccupied with collective actions, in particular violent strikes and riots.<sup>117</sup>

On the subject of Russian terrorism, Kropotkin expressed a similar position; he sympathised with the attacks on government agents but had misgivings about the efforts being made for a constitution rather than socialist revolution. In June 1879 he wrote an enthusiastic review of *Zemlya i volya* no.5, which advocated economic terrorism.<sup>118</sup> This coincided with a wave of economic terrorism, in particular arson attacks, carried out by rural workers in Andalusia.<sup>119</sup> The terrorist wave in Russia and Europe encouraged Kropotkin to look to all acts of revolt against oppression and to distinguish between

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<sup>114</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.92

<sup>115</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.102

<sup>116</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.107

<sup>117</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.119

<sup>118</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.123. See Chapter 5 of this thesis for economic terror in Russia.

<sup>119</sup> M. Nettlau *Short History* p.182

political and social acts. The increasingly narrow political forms of the Russian movement drew his attention to the fact that acts of revolt were not necessarily an antidote to the parliamentary tactics of the Social Democrats, and there was a need for anarchists to influence such acts. He called for a clarification of "action" as a means of propaganda at the congress of the Jura Federation in 1879, and criticised the confused idea of "propaganda by deed", repeating his idea that the propaganda effect of actions resulted from their impact on the real life struggle against oppression, i.e. when an action sprang "from life itself".<sup>120</sup> He focused on expropriation and insurrection; there were no short cuts to revolution, neither parliamentary nor terrorist.

However from late 1879, under the influence of the more individualist approach of his friend Elisée Reclus, and the activities in Russia of *Narodnaya volya*, Kropotkin began to take a broader view. While he remained above all enthusiastic for economic terror, and the rising tide of arson, riots and destruction of archives in Spain and Italy, he began to see individual or small group acts as part of the process of the awakening of the popular spirit of revolt. In a series of articles in *Le Révolté* entitled *L'Esprit de Révolte*, he discussed what he saw as the unfolding of the revolutionary process and the place of individual acts of revolt within it.<sup>121</sup> These articles were written with the forthcoming congress of London in mind. Looking to the French Revolution for an example, Kropotkin writes of the complaints of the peasants and their hatred for the lord, unbearable dues, hard winters and so on; but an abyss separates this grumbling from insurrection. So what is it that transforms complaints and silent suffering into deeds? The answer is action; the continuous actions of minorities. Actions which are solemn, humorous, daring, collective or purely individual but which take every opportunity to propagate and formulate discontent, arouse hatred for exploiters, ridicule governors and awaken by example the spirit of revolt.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.125

<sup>121</sup> "L'Esprit de Révolte" in *Le Révolté* 14 mai, 28 mai, 25 juin, 9 juillet 1881. An abridged translation of these articles can be found in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* New York 1927 pp.34-43

<sup>122</sup> *Le Révolté* 14 mai 1881 pp.1-2

However, as the articles go on, it becomes clear that Kropotkin is not advocating the political dynamite terrorism about which some of his anarchist colleagues were so enthusiastic. In the second article, he tries to give a more social dimension to acts of revolt. Amid all the complaints and discussion, an act of revolt occurs which sums up the dominant aspirations. Although cautious leaders attack such acts of folly, others admire their courage, and as the first go to jail, acts of revolt and revenge multiply. Apart from forcing everyone to discuss the ideas behind such acts, they above all awaken the spirit of revolt; suddenly the colossus does not seem so unshakeable. Troops in a province who were once so feared retreat before a group of peasants armed with sticks and stones; hope is born among the people. If desperation leads to revolts, writes Kropotkin, it is hope which makes revolutions.<sup>123</sup> Whereas previously repression killed energy, now in the period of ferment it provokes new acts of revolt, individual and collective, which spread and develop. Government and ruling class lose cohesion and begin to divide over reaction or concessions; but reaction now only sharpens the struggle, while concessions awaken the revolutionary spirit further, and finally the revolution breaks out.

With this analysis of the role of active minorities in the period of ferment leading up to revolution, Kropotkin hoped to clarify the role of action in propagating anarchism. To gain popular support during the revolution, a party had to affirm its ideas not only by word but by acts which are *the realisation of its thought*.<sup>124</sup> Its thinkers may be esteemed but it will not have the reputation of men of action; when the crowd comes out onto the street, it will follow those whom it knows well and whom it has seen agitating. A party which has affirmed itself by acts, which has the impulse to inspire individuals and groups to put their ideas into practice, to make its banner popular and its aspirations palpable and understandable will have some chance of realising its programme.

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<sup>123</sup> *Le Révolté* 28 mai 1881 p.1

<sup>124</sup> *Le Révolté* 28 mai 1881 p.1. Italics in text.

The important points to note in this analysis are: a party must affirm itself as a party of action if it is to win popular support in the revolution; that action must be an affirmation of its principles and programme; and the party must be closely involved in popular life so as to be known among the people and to use every opportunity which popular life provides to agitate. Thus Kropotkin's call for action should not be interpreted as a summons to terrorism; it is a call for anarchists to be known among the masses as men of action and ideas who will be turned to when revolution breaks out. As to the forms such action should take, again Kropotkin turns to the French Revolution for inspiration. He includes the distribution of the written word as a form of action; brochures, pamphlets and flyers brought new ideas to the masses, attacking the king and aristocracy, ridiculing the court and exposing vice, dissipation and stupidity.<sup>125</sup> Songs brought home hatred of royalty, clergy and aristocracy;<sup>126</sup> posters appeared whenever an event of interest to the public occurred, and in the period of ferment leading up to 1789, announcing a "St. Bartholomew's" for the big landowners, corn merchants, factory owners and so on.<sup>127</sup> The hanging, burning, or tearing apart in effigy of a figure of popular hatred was also an effective means of agitation.

Above all, every chance was used to get the crowds out onto the street. Orators would explain or comment on events; discussion groups would form spontaneously; in the villages, travelling players would attract crowds and use their act to parody the king and queen and attack the rich and powerful.<sup>128</sup> In the countryside, pictures and posters conveyed the message to illiterate peasants better than pamphlets; secret groups started to form, which attacked the lord and his property, or posted threats to the seigneur over dues, threatening to burn down the chateau. All of these methods of agitation, it will be noted, are traditional and popular, and spring

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<sup>125</sup> *Le Révolté* 25 juin 1881 p.1

<sup>126</sup> Songs were a popular method of propaganda in the Russian movement, and the Chaikovtsy and others distributed a *Pesennik* of revolutionary songs and poems to workers.

<sup>127</sup> *Le Révolté* 25 juin 1881 p.2 The reference is to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of protestants in France in 1572, an act which the poster referred to said should now be applied to the rich. These references to events leading up to 1789 in France are based on Kropotkin's research for a social history of the French Revolution, which is still available as P.A. Kropotkin *The Great French Revolution 1789-1793*. Introduction by A.M. Bonanno. London 1984

from within the life of the people. Kropotkin writes that had actions been directed purely at institutions of government, the French Revolution would never have become a general rising, nor lasted as long, nor changed France economically; it would have been a limitation of royal power only.<sup>129</sup>

This series of articles summarised Kropotkin's views on revolutionary action. He believed that daring acts carried out by individuals and small groups had a place in the build-up to revolution; but these individuals and groups, and their actions, should spring from within the people and from popular life. Attacks directed purely against political figures and institutions by clandestine terrorist groups, while often justified as revenge, were not effective as propaganda. As Max Nettlau puts it, "the anarchist idea had no need of demonstration by acts whose social and ideological significance called for very subtle interpretations."<sup>130</sup> This call for action within the masses, which Kropotkin raised at the London congress, was not heeded by most anarchists however.

### 5-3: Anarchist Communism

Coterminous with the Italians' formal adoption of propaganda by deed in 1876 was their declaration in favour of anarchist communism. Until the mid-1870s, the majority of anti-state socialists had been adherents of collectivism, that is, the ownership of land and the means of production by autonomous, federated producers' associations, as advocated by Bakunin. However, during the mid- to late 1870s support grew within the movement for anarchist communism. The essential difference between the two ideas concerns the distribution of the products of labour, which communists claimed should also be socialised in order to prevent accumulations of wealth; that is to say, the product of labour would not be the property of producers' associations but of the commune or community as a whole, with each member free to take what s/he needs from the common pot. Caroline Cahm sums up the difference thus: collectivism represents "from each according to ability, to each

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<sup>128</sup> *Le Révolté* 9 juillet 1881 p.1

<sup>129</sup> *Le Révolté* 9 juillet 1881 p.1

<sup>130</sup> M. Nettlau *Short History* p.148

according to work", while communism means "from each according to ability, to each according to need".<sup>131</sup>

It appears that the impetus for anarchist communism came from a pamphlet written by James Guillaume in 1874 entitled "Idées sur l'organisation sociale", in which he claimed that when production increased to a sufficient level after the revolution, each would be able to draw from an abundant social reserve, that is to say consumption would be collectivised as well as production. However Nettlau claims that the "Avenir" group of Geneva had discussed this idea as early as 1872.<sup>132</sup> The Italians Malatesta, Covelli and Costa, discussing the idea in 1876, concluded that the necessity of evaluating the product of labour would mean regulations and authority, and leave the weak or more needy disadvantaged. Therefore they agreed on the need to collectivise the product of labour as well as the means of production.<sup>133</sup> The Italians saw this as a necessary complement to collectivism rather than a denial of it, and as such it did not at first cause much of a stir in the anarchist movement.<sup>134</sup>

In the Jura Federation, communism was discussed at the 1878 congress, and in 1879, Kropotkin was calling for communism as an ultimate aim, with collectivism as a transitory stage, but only in 1880 did the Jura Federation adopt communism, after pressure from Kropotkin, Reclus, François Dumartheray and Georg Herzig. Other groups however rejected the idea, at least until the 1880s; Spain in 1877 called communism a "licence to idlers".<sup>135</sup> In Spain, the issue of communism caused much more controversy than elsewhere, since anarchism was closely identified with the trade unions, and the Spaniards were reluctant to accept an ideology which did not rely on unions as collectivism did.<sup>136</sup> Spanish anarchist communists claimed that the unions were too reformist and too cumbersome; they stressed building the revolution around cells of self-sacrificing radicals using violent tactics.

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<sup>131</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.39

<sup>132</sup> M. Nettlau *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin* Berlin 1927 p.228

<sup>133</sup> Nettlau *Der Anarchismus* p.23

<sup>134</sup> Guillaume *L'Internationale* pt.6 p.114

<sup>135</sup> Cahm *Kropotkin and the Rise...* p.59

<sup>136</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.110



Collectivists attacked the lack of organisation and the persecution which inevitably resulted from the violence which the communists advocated.<sup>137</sup> This feeds into the debate within anarchism in the late 1870s over organisation and tactics which, as we shall see, was summed up in London in 1881. As Kaplan points out, to the desperately poor and unemployed in areas like Andalusia, the collectivist idea of union control of the product of labour must have seemed like the tyranny of unions over the community. However in Spain as a whole, communism did not emerge as the dominant anarchist ideology until the late 1880s, and the arguments in favour of complete autonomy of individuals and groups led to the pattern of anarchist action in Spain in the 1890s- i.e. bombings.<sup>138</sup>

There would appear to be nothing inherent in the theoretical position of anarchist communism to connect it with tactical policies of propaganda by deed, or the later current of terrorism; nevertheless in Spain for example, there was a clear split between collectivist-syndicalist and communist-terrorist wings of anarchism by the 1880s.<sup>139</sup> In Italy, according to Pernicone, organisational weakness and ideological extremism were becoming a function of each other in the late 1870s; when the movement was least capable of direct action, the loudest calls for violence appeared.<sup>140</sup> Marie Fleming also links the rise of anarchist communism to that of terrorism.<sup>141</sup> However initially the Italians had adopted anarchist communism as a principle yet still retained insurrectionism as their main tactic, and Kropotkin, who was to become the foremost proponent of anarchist communism,<sup>142</sup> remained dubious about terrorism and opposed the organisational amorphousness of so many communists, so the link is not direct. Pernicone hints at a possible answer in calling the new approach to action "post-Internationalist".<sup>143</sup> With the demise

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<sup>137</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.114

<sup>138</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* p.132

<sup>139</sup> W. Bernecker, *Strategies of Direct Action and Violence in Spanish Anarchism* in Mommsen/Hirschfeld (eds) *Social Protest* p.101

<sup>140</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.185

<sup>141</sup> M. Fleming "Propaganda by the Deed: Terrorism and Anarchist Theory in Late Nineteenth Century Europe" in Y. Alexander/K. Myers (eds) *Terrorism in Europe* London/Canberra 1982 p.25

<sup>142</sup> See his "Anarchist Communism: its Basis and Principles" in P. Kropotkin *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* London 1987

<sup>143</sup> Pernicone *Italian Anarchism* p.187

of the International in the late 1870s, the focus shifted to small groups, autonomous but single-minded in their purpose of violence against the established order by guerrilla war and terror against persons and property. Thus it seems to me that it was not anarchist communism, but the breakdown of anarchist organisation which was the prime cause of the wave of terrorism.

However the new theory did offer "a new style of thinking which did not rely on formal labour organisations".<sup>144</sup> Perhaps this shift of focus away from producers' organisations as the vehicle for revolution helped open the way for tactics of insurrection and eventually, when this failed to produce results, terrorism? The fact of weakening the link with formal labour organisations could allow some minds to look either to broader organisations (insurrection), or small-group and individual acts (terrorism) as potentially revolutionary. Furthermore, as a more radical development in anarchism, there may simply have been an attraction to those who favoured more radical tactics. Operating outside of formal unions, which were often the subject of repression, and within working-class communities instead, anarchist communists may well have found themselves forming a separate subculture, rather than, as Kropotkin advocated in the *Spirit of Revolt* articles examined above, expressing in acts the aspirations of the masses. This is hinted at by Esenwein, who writes that the Spanish anarchist communists saw themselves in "a life-or-death struggle with the middle classes", and that acts of terror were perpetrated "not just by a few committed to abstract principles, but personalities attracted to a romantic revolutionary lifestyle".<sup>145</sup> It may be recalled from the previous chapter that the Russian *buntari* found themselves in just such an isolated position when they tried to integrate themselves into peasant communities, but were unable to be open about their activities for fear of arrest.

## **6: The London Congress of 1881**

It was in the atmosphere of disintegration, violence and isolation that a conference was organised in Summer 1881 in London to try to revive the anti-

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<sup>144</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* introduction p.8

<sup>145</sup> Esenwein *Anarchist Ideology* pp.168-170

authoritarian International. It turned out to be a burial rather than a resurrection however. In preliminary meetings of the "Intimité" (former members of Bakunin's secret alliance Malatesta, Cafiero, A. Schwitzguébel, L. Pindy plus Kropotkin) only Kropotkin and Malatesta were in favour of a mass organisation.<sup>146</sup> Cafiero said that the only thing for the conference to decide was how to organise violence. When the conference took place, the majority took the anti-organisation and pro-terrorist view, which the police agent Serraux helped to foster. Kropotkin called for a dual organisation of a Strikers' International with a mass membership to co-ordinate economic actions by workers, and within it a clandestine body to organise economic terror. Malatesta agreed, but added the idea of an organisation to fight states directly; political struggle was necessary, he claimed, since private property cannot be destroyed without also destroying the authority that upholds it.<sup>147</sup> Until now, he said, the International had been an organisation of purely economic struggle, but it was necessary to remember that the state was the guardian of property, and the workers would only "get to the property owner over the body of the gendarme."<sup>148</sup> This obviously implied to some extent a separation of the economic and political struggles. Kropotkin rejected this, fearing the formation of a hierarchical party of conspirators. Others however rejected the idea of a mass organisation altogether, calling for autonomy of groups and individuals, with no programme or statutes other than an agreement of solidarity with revolutionary acts.<sup>149</sup> Even the idea of a correspondence bureau was rejected by some, who feared the potential authority of any central body. The delegate from Paris, for example, claimed that the General Council had only been intended as a correspondence bureau, but had grown into an authority, and Serreaux opposed any sort of bureau whatsoever, even a "post-box"; any central body would constitute an

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<sup>146</sup> U. Linse in her "Propaganda by Deed and Direct Action" Mommsen/Hirschfeld *Social Protest* connects Kropotkin with anarchism's abandonment of formal organisation in favour of independent groups cut off from the masses, as does Marie Fleming in *Propaganda by the Deed...* Alexander/Myers *Terrorism* p.22. In fact Kropotkin fought hard against this tendency.

<sup>147</sup> M. Nettlau *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre* Berlin 1931, p.207

<sup>148</sup> *Le Révolté* 6 août 1881 p.2

<sup>149</sup> Nettlau *Anarchisten* p.211

authority.<sup>150</sup> Kropotkin questioned how it was possible to do without one; to whom would a new section address itself to join the International, and what section had the time or resources to communicate directly with five or six hundred other groups?

Kropotkin also had to struggle against the obsession with violence of some delegates.<sup>151</sup> In a discussion on the Internationalist press, the Mexican delegate proposed that there were already enough journals in existence for every tendency in the movement, and instead every section should study chemistry and military science.<sup>152</sup> This belief that only one form of propaganda was worthwhile was attacked by Kropotkin; the Russians, he said, had people with prior knowledge of the subject, but it was not a matter of a few hours study to become a chemist; the skills and knowledge involved could not be acquired in a section, nor should the sections be turned into military schools. He continued to call for other forms of propaganda; dynamite was not a panacea, it was but one form of action among many, which, he regretted, were being neglected. If a group found it necessary to use dynamite, it would do so, but this should not be elevated to the only form of propaganda.<sup>153</sup> Louise Michel supported this, calling for a broad range of propaganda and action,<sup>154</sup> while the Jura Federation emphasised the importance of propaganda in the countryside by means of flyers and brochures explaining in popular style the aims and principles of the International.<sup>155</sup> Kropotkin supported this, saying that leaflets should call frankly for the expropriation of the land by the peasants and its working in common.<sup>156</sup>

There was a debate on morality, a word which Serraux proposed should be struck from the statutes of the International. Kropotkin opposed this strongly and won a compromise which attempted to clarify the meaning of the morality of the anarchists as opposed to that of the bourgeoisie. It was ambiguous however: since the present world is based on immorality, its

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<sup>150</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.1

<sup>151</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.1

<sup>152</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.2

<sup>153</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.3

<sup>154</sup> Nettlau *Anarchisten* p.219

<sup>155</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.3

destruction by whatever means would lead to morality.<sup>157</sup> The influence of the terrorists is obvious here. The final report of the Congress called for the addition of propaganda by deed to the "less effective" means of oral and written propaganda; for the abandonment of all legal methods; and for the study of technical, chemical and military sciences as means of struggle and attack.<sup>158</sup> While some anarchists, including Malatesta and Kropotkin, had wanted to unite forces, with Malatesta prepared to countenance working with political revolutionaries, and Kropotkin calling for mass expansion of the International, the main trend was in the opposite direction. Far from reawakening the International, the Congress gave the movement a secret and exclusive appearance, and staked everything on the potential of terrorism to spark a popular revolt. This position isolated the movement and was open to exploitation by its enemies.

## **7: Conclusion**

Like the populists in Russia, the anarchists in Europe tried in the early 1870s to raise a mass movement among the poor and oppressed, regarding the peasants as both necessary and hopeful revolutionary material. In the face of severe repression from governments, many anarchists (though by no means all) moved from a concentration on organising and propagandising workers to policies of small-group terrorism, with a view to exacting revenge against their enemies, attracting attention to their ideas, and perhaps sparking a popular revolt. The debates of the Congress of 1881 and those which split *Zemlya i volya* in Russia in 1879 are remarkably similar; while some of the anarchists, such as Kropotkin and Malatesta, wanted to rebuild a mass, federated movement of workers and peasants, using strikes, insurrections and economic terrorism, the majority of militants seemed bent on creating small, secret cells of professional revolutionaries and using dynamite to attack the state and the ruling class. Indeed, the focus seemed to have shifted from direct action by workers and peasants, without mediation or representation, to direct action by the anarchists, without any interference from their supposed

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<sup>156</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.3

<sup>157</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.213

<sup>158</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.221

constituencies. Nevertheless I would have to question Fleming's claim that anarchist theory, due to its espousal of individual autonomy, meant that anarchists had to accept terrorism.<sup>159</sup> This ignores the debates going on in anarchism at the time, and the fact that anarchist theory contained competing tendencies. Kropotkin's non-condemnation of the attentats was based on a refusal to condemn the desperate acts of the impoverished and oppressed, which were a mere precursor to a broader revolutionary movement; a sign of the times so to speak. This did not mean that terror should be elevated into a conscious tactic by the revolutionaries themselves. It is also worth pointing out, as David Miller does, that while most anarchists have accepted *violence* as necessary or unavoidable in the overthrow of the economic system, (since the ruling classes are bound to resist by force such an overthrow), this is not the same as accepting *terrorism*, which is qualitatively different.<sup>160</sup> However the link between terrorism and those anarchists who denied the use of any broad organisation and espoused complete individual autonomy ("amorphousness") is correct.

In Russia, a minority of the *Zemlevol'tsy*, recognising their failure to build a mass movement and desiring to attack the government directly, proposed an adoption of terrorism and regicide, cutting themselves off from the mass of the peasantry and taking the revolutionary struggle entirely onto their own shoulders. In both cases, others defended the more traditional methods of propaganda and organisation among the people, with little success. These groups did not deny violence; all recognised that at some point a violent revolution would have to be undertaken. The point of debate in both movements was not over the use of violence per se, but rather over the aims of violence (political vs. socio-economic change) and the related issue of who was to carry out that violence, a mass popular organisation or a clandestine revolutionary group, and the targets - economic exploiters or political and state representatives. Thus the issue of revolutionary violence has to be divided between social violence, connected to a broad popular social-

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<sup>159</sup> Fleming "Propaganda by the Deed.." in Alexander/Myers *Terrorism* p.25

<sup>160</sup> D. Miller *Anarchism* London 1984 p.109

revolutionary movement, and political violence, or terrorism, connected to a clandestine movement of professional revolutionaries seeking political change.

Other comparisons can also be made; for example the similarities between the call of the Spanish FRE in 1874 for reprisals against capitalists and oppressors and the policy of economic terror advocated by some of the populists of Southern Russia. Both advocated violence, but the violence was to be carried out by the workers and peasants, not by professional revolutionaries, and against economic rather than political targets, and looked to traditional popular methods such as arson, riot, food seizures and so on. Kropotkin was enthusiastic about this policy in Russia, of which the leading exponents were M. Shchedrin and E. Koval'skaya of the South Russian Workers' Union. This sprang from his interpretation of propaganda by deed; genuine acts of revolt by peasants or workers could inspire others in equally desperate situations to do the same. A more political interpretation of the term led others to believe that assassinations and bomb attacks by individuals and small groups against political figures, heads of state and others could inspire the populace to revolution.

Important differences also stand out. In terms of organisation, while the trend in anarchism was from federalism to "amorphousness", the populist movement was becoming ever more centralised and hierarchical. In both cases this was born of, and resulted in, isolation from the masses in whose name they claimed to act. However, for the purposes of comparison, this actual difference may be less important than the fact that, as we have seen, many anarchists saw themselves reflected in *Narodnaya volya*, mistakenly thinking that it was an agglomeration of autonomous cells. The predilection, especially amongst anarchist communists from the late 1870s, for small cells of revolutionaries carrying out acts of violence, sprang not from the theory of anarchist communism as much as from the breakdown in organisation, persecution of unions and the impossibility of actions such as strikes, as well as from reaction against turncoats like Brousse and Costa, indignation at the scramble for parliamentary seats, and the example of fortitude of the

Russians.<sup>161</sup> As we have seen, anarchist communism in the hands of Kropotkin, for example, meant a shift from a focus on union activism to community activism, i.e. a broadening rather than a narrowing of anarchist activity. In practice, however, the result was an isolated subculture of violence.

Anarchists on the whole also seem to have been unaware of (or deliberately ignoring) the Russians' focus on using violence to achieve political change, as opposed to social and economic change which was the *raison d'être* of anarchism. Those anarchists who took up terrorism hoped to inspire popular revolt, while *Narodnaya volya* hoped for more modest, political results from their campaign. Moreover it was perceived that the Narodovol'tsy were the most active and successful revolutionary group of the time, and their tactics were to be emulated. The growing isolation and persecution faced by the anarchist movement at the end of the 1870s had diverse effects; some defected to legal socialism (Costa, Brousse); others stubbornly persisted in trying to build mass organisations (Kropotkin, Malatesta). Still others, seeing no possibility for popular organisations which were so easily infiltrated and brought down by governments, made a virtue out of their isolated positions and like the Russians, who were in the same situation vis-à-vis the masses, took up conspiracy and terrorism. But while *Narodnaya volya* were perceived in Europe as social revolutionaries, in fact their use of terrorism was aimed at forcing the government to grant political change; meanwhile the anarchist terrorists hoped to inspire popular revolt, perhaps not realising that they were in fact placing themselves in the same position as *Narodnaya volya*, that of an isolated duel with the forces of the state.

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<sup>161</sup> Nettlau *Short History* p.148



## Conclusion

### 1: General

Some of the parallels between the anarchist movement in Europe and the Russian populists should now be clear. Both movements tried in the early 1870s to raise a mass movement among the poor and oppressed, seeing both the peasants and the workers as promising revolutionary material. Both movements faced severe repression from governments. Influential sections of both moved from a concentration on organising and propagandising masses to an acceptance of direct violence by small groups and individuals, and, with a lack of popular support, to policies of terrorism, with the aim of exacting revenge against their enemies, attracting attention to their ideas, and sparking a popular revolt. The object of this thesis has been to examine Russian populism in the context of the broader revolutionary movement in Europe, in particular anarchism. However, the conclusion in general must be that populism and anarchism were not the same, although some of the populists were consciously anarchist. Rather, it is hoped that in comparing the main themes raised in studying populism and anarchism together, we have shown that within both movements, debate and dissent turned on similar issues: constituency, tactics and organisation.

### 2: Constituency

Marxist writers such as Eric Hobsbawm have in the past tried to portray anarchism as a pre-modern philosophy born of the reaction of peasant smallholders and artisans against the encroachments of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> As we have demonstrated in Chapter 1's examination of Bakunin's ideology, classical anarchism did indeed provide a critique of capitalism (and of statist socialism in its various forms) which, however, went beyond a simple rejection of modernity to encourage the exploited classes to take control of modernity. Bakunin and the anarchists included in the category of the exploited, and therefore of potential revolutionaries, peasants, workers, the unemployed, impoverished artisans and small shopkeepers, and even bandits and vagabonds. Bakunin focused on the need to bring the peasants into the

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<sup>1</sup> E. Hobsbawm *Primitive Rebels* Manchester 1959 p.92

struggle for economic emancipation, not to base that struggle on peasants alone. Bakunin included peasants in the revolutionary army for two reasons; firstly, many lived in extreme poverty and were thus more antagonistic to the current social order than well-paid skilled urban workers, and secondly, if the revolution were narrowly based on the urban proletariat, socialisation of the land would have to be carried out by force, requiring a repressive state and potential civil war.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from his insistence on the role of peasants in revolution, Bakunin differed from Marx on two important points in his class analysis. Firstly he noted the existence of a labour aristocracy in many European countries, and was wary of this special category of "relatively affluent workers, earning higher wages, boasting of their literary capacities and... impregnated by a variety of bourgeois prejudices".<sup>3</sup> Bakunin looked to what Marx called the "lumpenproletariat" rather than the better-off skilled workers as the main revolutionary force, because they had nothing to lose in a revolution. Secondly, Bakunin rejected collaboration with bourgeois radicals. This relates to his rejection of political reform as a means of advancing the workers' cause. However, he did see a role for members of the radical intelligentsia who had managed fully to declass themselves and break all ties with the bourgeois world. If they could set aside all considerations apart from devotion to the workers' cause, abandoning material comforts and love of rank and privilege, such intellectuals could render "priceless services" to the revolutionary movement. They could contribute "expert knowledge, the capacity for abstract thought and generalisation, and the ability to organise and co-ordinate".<sup>4</sup> Thus Bakunin tried to attract alienated intellectuals to his cause as well as workers and peasants. Speaking of the movement in Russia, he recommended that the radical youth cut all ties with the exploiters and enemies of the people and regard themselves as capital to be spent on arousing and organising the popular uprising. The revolutionaries would only

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<sup>2</sup> M. Bakunin "Lettres à un Français sur la Crise Actuelle" in *Archives Bakounine* VI p.116

<sup>3</sup> M. Bakunin "Some Preconditions for a Social Revolution" in S. Dolgoff (ed.) *Bakunin on Anarchy* London 1973 p.334

<sup>4</sup> Dolgoff *Bakunin on Anarchy* p.333

be trusted, when the peasants and workers encountered them in their own lives, misfortunes and rebellions.<sup>5</sup> In other words, they had to live the life of the people.

Z.K. Ralli and the Russian anarchist émigrés in Switzerland were of course strongly influenced by Bakunin in all aspects of their ideology, having been persuaded by him to abandon the Jacobin methods advocated by Nechaev. However, reflecting their background in the Russian movement of the later 1860s and early 1870s, their main disputes were with the followers of Petr Lavrov rather than Karl Marx. Apart from the squabbles over control of the Russian library in Zurich, which descended into farce, there were serious points of debate between the two groupings. On the subject of constituency, the main difference was that, while the Lavrovists focused on the students and radical intellectuals in the first instance, in the hope of building up cadres of socialists well-versed in all aspects of the social question and other matters of importance to the *narod* like agronomy or medicine, Ralli and his anarchist colleagues looked to the *narod* directly. Following Bakunin, they held that the germ of socialism existed within the *narod*, formed by historical experience and economic reality; it did not have to be inculcated by intellectuals. Indeed, for Ralli's group, the path for intellectuals and students to follow if they genuinely wished to help the popular cause was not to study so as to take knowledge to the people at some later date, but to leave the university, join the people and help them enunciate the socialist ideal which already existed in the popular consciousness, and to organise effectively on the basis of that ideal.<sup>6</sup>

They did not, however, see the *narod* as an undifferentiated mass. As we demonstrated in Chapter 2, their propaganda was aimed at peasants and poorer workers. In an attempt to link the socialist movement in Russia with that in the west, Ralli's book *Sytye i golodnye* looked at both peasant revolts and workers' movements as inspirations for its audience in Russia; and the newspaper produced by the group, *Rabotnik*, also addressed worker and

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<sup>5</sup> M. Bakunin *Statism and Anarchy* Cambridge 1990 pp.216-7

<sup>6</sup> *Revolutsionnaya obshchina russkikh anarkhistov K russkim revolyutsioneram* Geneva 1873 p.13

peasant issues, and looked in particular to the recently urbanised peasant, forced off the land to seek work in the city. *Rabotnik* did not signify a turn in the Russian movement from peasants to workers; as we have seen, it tried to link the problems of urban and rural workers and emphasised their need to conspire and fight together. Thus the *fabrichnye*, who were assumed to have stronger ties with the villages, were a particular target, although the *zavodskie* are not ignored. Therefore the paper reported both on village bunts and strikes in the factories. In essence, Ralli's group tried to adapt anarchist ideas on constituency to Russian conditions, looking to the poorer workers and the peasants. While differences within the working class were implicitly recognised by the paper's focus on the *fabrichnye* workers, social gradation within the peasantry was also spelled out with "a curse on the race of kulaks and miroeds!"<sup>7</sup>

As we saw in Chapter 6, the International in the early 1870s was predominantly an urban organisation, and this persisted into the mid- and late 1870s in the anti-authoritarian International. The anarchists however desired to extend organisation into the peasantry to unite the rural and urban poor in the struggle against economic oppression. The Italians considered the highest duty of anarchists to be propaganda in the countryside, and as we have seen, they made attempts to involve the peasants in insurrections, although with limited success. In Spain, and particularly in Andalusia, rural proletarians joined with urban workers in anarchist insurrections at the time of the Cantonalist risings of 1873. Kropotkin looked to the Chicago railway strikers and to the rural arsonists of Andalusia as hopeful signs of the coming revolution.

As the revolutionary movement in Russia began to move away from Jacobin and elitist forms and towards a desire to involve the *narod* in making their own revolution, so the issue of constituency had also to be addressed. At the start of the 1870s, the basic division between moderates and radicals was over whether to address students and the intelligentsia or the *narod* itself. Nechaev, in spite of his Machiavellism, aimed at some form of peasant

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<sup>7</sup> F. Venturi *Roots of Revolution* Chicago 1983 p.530

revolt, while Mark Natanson's group, later to become the Chaikovskii circle, began the decade as a students' self-education group. However, under the influence of the Paris Commune, rumours about the International, and influx of radical members and finally, contact with workers, the *Chaikovtsy* began to move away from their student-based Lavrovism to concentrate their propaganda among the workers. As we have seen, although Russian populism is often regarded as a movement aimed at the peasants, the first contacts between radical students and the *narod* were with workers in cities like St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Odessa.

Nevertheless, as we discussed in Chapter 2, although the *Chaikovtsy* had fruitful contact with workers, in terms of establishing an extensive propaganda network in several towns, they also hoped to reach the peasants. Contrary to P.S. McKinsey's view, it does not seem to me that the *Chaikovtsy's* attempts to propagandise amongst the peasants were forced upon them by the collapse of their effort among the urban workers, since the evidence indicates that when the first attempts were made to go to the countryside, workers' propaganda circles in St. Petersburg and elsewhere were still going strong. Rather, it seems to me, this was part of an effort to reach the *narod* as a whole, peasants and workers.

Like the anarchists in Europe, the *Chaikovtsy* also came up against distinctions within the urban workers, and if the memoirs are to be believed, reached similar conclusions as to which section of the workers was the most hopeful as a revolutionary force. The better-paid, skilled and more urbanised workers in the *zavody* were, according to memoir accounts like Kropotkin's, less receptive to socialist propaganda than the poorly paid, unskilled, semi-peasant *fabrichnye*.<sup>8</sup> However it should be borne in mind that propaganda circles among *zavodskie* workers were successful, and that, as Reginald Zelnik has claimed, it is likely that the strain in relations which appeared between the *Chaikovtsy* and the *zavodskie* had more to do with the anxiety of the former to reach the peasants, at the expense of their worker groups, than with the workers' unresponsiveness. Nevertheless, a distinction was noted,

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<sup>8</sup> P. Kropotkin *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* New York 1970 p.324

and the focus of the *Chaikovtsy* does seem to have settled on poorer workers and peasants.

This trend was continued, after the mass arrests and collapse of the movement of 1873-4, by the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation during 1875. Worker members of this group such as Petr Alekseev and Mikhail Grachevskii also noted the existence of a labour "aristocracy" of skilled workers, and found the *fabrichnye* more responsive to propaganda, as well as having retained valued ties with their home villages.<sup>9</sup> Thus the organisation's perceptions of the workers, and their favoured constituency, can be seen to show continuity from the pre-1874 movement, and to be similar to that of the anarchists. They saw revolutionary potential in urban-rural ties and in the combination of urban and rural discontent; this, and quite possibly the growing unrest in the *fabriki* of Moscow, was the basis for their choice of operational base. As we have seen, however, at the time of the fall of the group, they were beginning to expand into smaller towns and even villages. We have also noted the focus of the newspaper *Rabotnik*, which the group distributed, on *fabrichnye* workers, and recently urbanised and non-urbanised peasants. The Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation thus did not represent a turn away from peasants toward workers, and the beginning of a shift toward the city and a political movement in populism; as we have argued in subsequent chapters, this was not to happen until several years later.

The issue of constituency facing socialists in the west continued to be felt in Russia also, as groups such as the Kiev *buntari* focused on the poorest and especially the peasants, while Evgenii Zaslavskii's Southern Union consisted mostly of *zavodskie* workers. The early *Zemlya i volya* focused on the peasants; it appears that the failure of the movement to the people of 1874 indicated not that the peasants were unsuitable revolutionary material, but that more care and time needed to be spent in propagandising them. Nevertheless, they also saw the need to propagandise among the *zavodskie* workers and students and intelligentsia, and although like Bakunin and the

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<sup>9</sup> I.S. Dzhabadari "Protsess 50-i" pt. 3 in *Byloe* 1907 no.10 p.169

anarchists they advocated living among the people, they saw semi-intelligentsia positions such as scribe, or village teacher or doctor, as more appropriate than fully declassing themselves and trying to "become" peasants or workers.

The peasants continued to be the focus of a majority of *Zemlevol'tsy* until the organisation split in 1879; as we demonstrated in Chapter 5, the organisation did not develop into an urban-based terrorist group, rather a faction grew at the end of the 1870s which placed no hope in propaganda among peasants; this is connected with their desire for political rather than social revolution as an immediate aim. This faction, *Narodnaya volya*, insofar as they valued propaganda, looked to workers rather than peasants, although this was due to their strategic location in the towns, not their economic position. Meanwhile, the majority *narodnik* faction which formed the ill-fated *Chernyi peredel* continued to look to the workers and peasants; Koval'skaya's and Shchedrin's South Russian Workers' Union looked to the same constituency but split off over issues of tactics.

## 2-1: Gender

Related to the issue of constituency is that of gender. The main issue here is that, unlike the majority of revolutionary movements before and since, Russian populism boasted a high rate of participation by women, including the groups of women which helped found the Chaikovskii circle and the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation. The question of why this should be the case is not easy to answer. We have speculatively put forward a number of contributory factors: the struggle for female emancipation leading women into the only arena where they could be treated as equals and prove their worth, the revolutionary movement; the influence of Chernyshevskii in offering blueprints for women to escape family tyranny and linking this to socialism; the struggle for education leading to contacts with radicals in Zurich and elsewhere. Amy Knight claims that for many women, joining the revolutionary movement was an act of personal emancipation;<sup>10</sup> Robert McNeal raises the possibility that radical men encouraged women to join the

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<sup>10</sup> A. Knight "The Fritschi" in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* vol.9 no.1 p.3

movement to prove their own moral worth through platonic and equal relationships.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, while it is true that women played important roles in the Russian populist movement as propagandists, agitators and later, terrorists, they were still not represented at the level of theory; "sacred knowledge" remained the property of men.

In anarchism, women do not seem to have played such a prominent role. The leaders, theoreticians and activists remained dominantly male, with women like Louise Michel remaining a small minority. However, in contrast with the Russian revolutionaries, anarchists could report some success in organising working-class women; as we saw in Chapter 6, in Spain and Italy, some effort was made to organise women's groups; Temma Kaplan writes that the Spanish anarchists were more sensitive to the connections between socialism and the liberation of women from sexual and family tyranny than any other European political group.<sup>12</sup> Like Russia's populists they seemed to see the connection between family patriarch and the patriarchal state, but traditional views of women's role in society and family, present and future, remained. In Russia, there appears to be little evidence of the populists organising working-class or peasant women. The women of the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation who went to work in Moscow's factories and mills quickly gave up on trying to propagandise women and turned to male workers instead, exposing themselves to greater risk. The apparent lack of response from women in the factories could speculatively be attributed to their particular economic and cultural degradation, to their being "a race within a race" of workers, as Rose Glickman puts it.<sup>13</sup> Other issues such as the retention of family control over women in factories, the heritage of village patriarchy, religion, their lack of institutions like *artels* and their greater likelihood of losing *zemlyachestvo*, the double burden of work and family and the attitude that learning was for men all probably contributed. Little effort

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<sup>11</sup> R. McNeal "Women in the Russian Radical Movement" in *Journal of Social History* vol.5 no.2 (Winter 1971-2) p.146

<sup>12</sup> T. Kaplan "Other Scenarios: Women and Spanish Anarchism" in R. Bridenthal (ed.) *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* Boston 1977 p.402

<sup>13</sup> R. Glickman *Russian Factory Women* Berkeley 1984 pp.23-6



seems to have been made by the populists of either sex at the time to understand the particular problems of women within the oppressed classes.

### **3: Organisation**

In terms of the organisational forms adopted by the two revolutionary movements under examination, again we see the same debates arising in both, although not always the same solutions. In Chapter 1 we examined Bakunin's federalism, and his insistence that real freedom could only be guaranteed through real equality; this meant economic equality, and a non-hierarchical, federalist society, in which all individuals and units of society are allowed to form federal links with whomever they wish. This vision of society organised from the circumference inwards applied equally to the revolutionary movement; social, as opposed to political revolution, required the destruction of the instruments of power at local level, and local groups must work autonomously but in co-ordination with other groups across regions, countries and continents. In order to co-ordinate such an undertaking, Bakunin saw the need for a tightly-knit secret society of dedicated revolutionaries made up of *déclassés* intellectuals and the best representatives of workers and peasants. A few in each locality, but working closely with their colleagues elsewhere, would be enough to cultivate the self-activity of workers and peasants, to help them to realise the causes of their oppression and to work out the means to realise their own liberation, and to co-ordinate the popular rising when it finally occurred. This was the organisational form taken by the Italian and Spanish Federations of the International and by the Anti-authoritarian International generally. This was opposed to the centralist forms which Marx and Engels wished to impose on the International, and relates to the differing goals of the two wings of the socialist movement; statist wished to seize political power to use it to the advantage of the workers, necessitating a centralist party of political struggle, while anti-statists held that this would simply create a new ruling class, and that it was necessary to destroy political power at the level at which it impacted upon communities, necessitating federalist forms.

Similar debates took place within the Russian movement. The Chaikovskii circle began in opposition to Nechaev's Jacobin elitism, as a non-

hierarchical group based on personal trust. As the group grew and spread, it linked with groups in other towns, and while the St. Petersburg group remained the strongest, its links with other towns were federal. As they began to attract support from workers, they inadvertently formed similar structures to those which the anarchists were trying to create; locally-based workers' groups with federal links and a secret network of revolutionaries trying to co-ordinate activities. This may at least in part explain the enthusiastic reception of Bakunin's "Statism and Anarchy", which recommended the sort of structures the *Chaikovtsy* were already creating. The Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation chose similar forms, although they also created an "administration" to take care of non-propaganda work; this operated, however, on a rotating basis to prevent any accumulation of personal power. They aimed to create a federated organisation across the whole of Russia. Even Zaslavskii's Southern Union of 1875, which recognised political struggle to some degree, rejected centralism in its organisation, and *Zemlya i volya* began on a federalist basis also. The rural colonies set up by *Zemlya i volya* were autonomous, and unity was based on ideas rather than organisational structure. However, from 1878, Aleksandr Mikhailov began to centralise the organisation, and drew up an *ustav* with a strong element of central control by the St. Petersburg group as well as party discipline. Many *zemlevol'tsy* in the towns were concentrating on the fight with the authorities and the idea of a political struggle was beginning to infiltrate the organisation through the likes of Valerian Osinskii and his Executive Committee in the south. When the organisation split in 1879, *Narodnaya volya* appeared as a strongly centralist and hierarchical party based round the Executive Committee, while *Chernyi peredel* retained the principle of federalism, as did Koval'skaya's and Shchedrin's South Russian Workers Union.

At the same time as *Narodnaya volya* was forming on a centralist basis in Russia, many anarchists were abandoning their previous organisational forms however. In the post-Internationalist era at the end of the 1870s, the difficulty of arranging mass actions, and isolation brought about by repression led some anarchists to look to small, autonomous cells of revolutionaries as

the ideal. These anarchists rejected any form of organisation as authoritarian. At the London congress in 1881, while Kropotkin called for a mass-membership International containing secret networks of revolutionaries, others rejected even the creation of a correspondence bureau. Partly this was influenced by anarchists' perceptions of *Narodnaya volya*, which they assumed to be a network of secret terrorist cells. Both in Russian populism and in anarchism, the voices calling for a federal mass movement were drowned out by elitist terrorists; in Russia however the terrorists were centrally and hierarchically organised, while in the anarchist movement they had virtually no organisational forms at all; they were, in Max Nettlau's words, "amorphous".<sup>14</sup>

#### **4: Tactics**

In both the Russian populist and European anarchist movements, revolutionary tactics were closely connected with both the goals and the organisational forms espoused by the groups involved. As we have seen, Bakunin insisted that the revolution must be made by the oppressed people themselves, both rural and urban, and not take the form of a seizure of state power focused on the capital but the destruction of the instruments of power from local level upwards, including the destruction of the state. To accomplish this he envisioned a popular insurrection in which property would be confiscated and taken into social ownership, records of property, debt, taxation and so on would be burned and the resources, organisations and administration of the state would be targetted and disrupted. The revolution must have a federal character, with risings taking place simultaneously, co-ordinated by a strong, secret revolutionary association. His critique of political authority led him to reject class collaboration and gradualist means. However Bakunin was not opposed to strikes by workers to improve their conditions, and was aware of the educational value of institutions such as co-operatives, but his basic message was that workers and peasants should organise themselves to seize the means of production.

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<sup>14</sup> M. Nettlau *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre* Berlin 1931 p.131

Bakunin has been portrayed in the past as a prophet of random destructivism, and with his ideas on propaganda of deeds, as standing "at the fountainhead of a minor tradition of destructive and violent anarchism" and "the shadow behind the later bomb-throwers and assassins".<sup>15</sup> I have tried to demonstrate in the course of this thesis that this was not the case, and that although Bakunin recognised that revolution would be violent, there is a qualitative difference between the social violence of insurrection and the educative effect of attempts by workers and peasants to seize the means of production - which is what Bakunin meant by the propaganda of deeds - and later random terrorism and political assassination which is essentially individual and political violence.

Within the International in the early 1870s, many anarchists espoused the strike as the means to bring about the destruction of capitalism. These early syndicalists hoped to use carefully timed strikes to win concessions and raise consciousness, leading eventually to a general strike to bring down capitalism. This policy was obviously based on an urban working-class constituency and the possibility of forming unions, as well as on the collectivism which saw the producers' union as the basic unit of the future society. With the advent of severe repressions across Europe, attempts to bring in other social groups such as peasants, and the rise of anarcho-communism which looked to the producing and consuming community rather than just the workers, the strike was superseded in anarchism by insurrectionism. Spain and Italy led the way in the adoption of this tactic; as repression of the International and of unions in Spain made striking difficult, insurrections took place in towns like Alcoy and Sanlucar de Barrameda in 1873-4. Local anarchist groups became secret societies, and adopted a form of direct action which did not rely on open unions. In Italy, the strike had never been a popular weapon for anarchists, although their value in educating workers and creating solidarity was recognised. In 1874 Italian anarchists, accompanied by Bakunin, attempted to stage an insurrection, which failed due to swift action by the authorities and the lack of any organic connection

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<sup>15</sup> P. Marshall *Demanding the Impossible* London 1992 p.306

with peasant protest. A further attempt was made in the Matese mountains which failed for similar reasons.

This second attempt was associated with the Italians' espousal in 1876 of the idea of "propaganda by deed". I have tried to show that although this phrase came to be associated with terrorism, it originally meant insurrection; the fact of carrying out an insurrection would not only raise revolutionary spirits, the seizure and collectivisation of the land and means of production by peasants and workers would also provide a graphic illustration of the meaning of revolutionary socialism which the printed or spoken word could not match. Nevertheless, the phrase "propaganda by deed" came to be associated with more dubious methods by the end of the decade. I have examined Kropotkin's attitude to propaganda by deed in an attempt to illustrate the shifts in meaning which the term underwent in the context of the disintegration of the international anarchist movement in the late 1870s. Kropotkin recognised the potential for revolutionary acts of themselves to spread ideas; initially however he looked to collective and insurrectionary acts. He also insisted that such acts be genuine acts of revolt; the message of revolutionary socialism could be communicated only by revolutionary socialist acts. This differed from the attitude taken by Paul Brousse and others, who seemed to believe that virtually any act had propaganda value, and as David Stafford suggests, used "propaganda by deed" as a get-out clause; if an act succeeded, all well and good, if it failed, it was propaganda by deed.<sup>16</sup> As I have tried to demonstrate, it is this attitude which lay at the root of propaganda by deed as individual and political terror in the anarchist movement.

Other influences on the adoption by anarchists of dynamite terrorism included the difficulty of carrying out mass actions (as illustrated by the failure of the Italians' insurrections), growing isolation from the masses, desire for reprisals, the spectacular exploits of *Narodnaya volya* in Russia, and the breakdown of wider anarchist organisations like the Anti-authoritarian International. Some authors have tried to associate anarchist communism

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<sup>16</sup> D. Stafford *From Anarchism to Reformism* London 1971 p.87

with terrorism; however, I have tried to show that while there may be some connection between ideological "extremism" and extreme tactics, the adoption of individual terror as a tactic had more to do with the breakdown of organisation and the desperation to find a tactical alternative to parliamentary socialism than with communism; the Italian anarchists adopted communism as their ideology in 1876 but advocated collective insurrection as their tactic; Kropotkin was to become the foremost proponent of anarchist communism but remained very dubious about terrorism. Terrorism was a "post-International" approach, resulting from organisational breakdown, isolation from the masses and the reduction of the movement to an amorphous collection of secret cells which bred their own romantic subculture of dramatic acts and martyrdom. At the anarchist congress of 1881, Kropotkin continued to look for collective and individual acts which summed up the aspirations of workers, and in his *Esprit de révolte* articles looked particularly to the adoption of traditional popular tactics of propaganda; others seemed to espouse a guerrilla war against the government and the middle classes.

Kropotkin also continued to advocate propaganda by spoken and written word, alongside other means, as Bakunin had done before him. We have seen that while Bakunin was perceived by many in Russia as advocating immediate *bunty* in the countryside, since the *narod* were already instinctively socialist, in fact he recognised the need for this instinct to be educated by propaganda and suggested a popular newspaper to accomplish this in Russia. This was reflected in the activities of the *Chaikovtsy* and the Pan-Russian Social Revolutionaries rather than by the *buntari*. Kropotkin continued this trend - at the conference of 1881 he was in a minority in continuing to advocate written and spoken methods of propaganda, while the majority pronounced them "less effective" than dynamite, and advocated the study of the technical and military sciences.<sup>17</sup> This was influenced by *Narodnaya volya*'s regicide; many anarchists did not seem to be aware of the political nature of *Narodnaya volya*'s campaign.

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<sup>17</sup> *Le Révolté* 20 aout 1881 p.2

Parallel debates over tactics went on in Russia. We have seen how the *Chaikovtsy* moved from a position of propaganda among students to propaganda among workers, and the inconclusive arguments over Kropotkin's manifesto which advocated peasant insurrectionism. While the buntarist groups aimed to start local revolts wherever they could, Kropotkin seemed to have something more organised in mind; a sustained campaign of propaganda and agitation. Ralli's émigré group and the Pan-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organisation had similar ideas; they hoped to spread socialism by written and oral propaganda and agitation, and did not deny the usefulness of literacy to the workers as some *buntari* did. The Pan-Russian Social Revolutionaries' ultimate aim was that of Bakunin and of the Italians: to link rural and urban insurrections aimed at seizing the land and means of production. They recognised the effectiveness of written propaganda and the propaganda effect of revolutionary deeds. Strikes, while not seen as revolutionary, were deemed to have at least an educative effect.

Within *Zemlya i volya*, the debates in Russia over tactics can be seen to parallel those in European anarchism, although there are differences too. Like anarchism, *Zemlya i volya* became divided between factions which espoused on the one hand terrorism carried out by clandestine groups, and on the other, a mass-based federalist organisation to enable workers and peasants to seize control of their own lives. After the split, as we have seen, a further faction appeared which, while espousing the federal mass organisation principle, adopted economic terror as a tactic; i.e. violence carried out by workers and peasants against their immediate enemies. This is reflective of the debate in anarchism over social and economic versus individual and political violence as a revolutionary tactic, as well as bringing in popular tactics of resistance such as arson and crop destruction. The major difference between populism and anarchism on the issue of violence, however, is that in Russia, the terrorist campaign of *Narodnaya volya* was based in a campaign for political change; terrorists like Valerian Osinskii felt that for socialist propaganda to be possible, a constitution was necessary in Russia, and this could only be achieved by a campaign of political terror. Only

a few within the group, like A.V. Yakimova, linked terror to the social revolution. Anarchist terror, on the other hand, seems to have been predicated on a distortion of the idea of propaganda by deed, begun by Paul Brousse, which maintained that virtually any violent act could have a revolutionary socialist propaganda effect on the masses.

Like Kropotkin and Malatesta in the west, *Chernyi peredel* in Russia continued to espouse mass movements and reject political terror; they were joined by the South Russian Workers' Union who added the element of economic terror. Like Kropotkin and Malatesta however, they were swimming against the tide; in both movements the advocates of collective, economic and anti-political tactics were drowned out by those who advocated individual political terrorism, and seemed to see the isolation from the masses which this brought as a virtue; the emancipation of the workers was no longer the task of the workers themselves, but of elite groups of revolutionaries.

In general terms, this thesis has demonstrated two things. Firstly, it has shown, through a thorough examination of the populist movement in 1870s Russia, that, contrary to the impression created by much of the literature on populism, the movement did not develop in a linear fashion, with the force of events such as the failure of the movement to the people of 1874, or the heavy police repression of 1878 onwards, dictating changes in policy and tactics. In fact, from a very early stage the populist movement contained numerous different tendencies and debates over constituency, organisation, tactics, and the aims of revolution took place between rival factions throughout the decade. Secondly, through a comparative study of the anarchist movement in Europe during the same decade, it becomes clear that similar debates were taking place there. Consequently, the trend in Western liberal and Soviet Marxist historiography to portray populism as the forerunner of Bolshevism, i.e. to place it within a broader schema of linear development particular to Russia, is also misleading. In order to be understood more fully, populism needs to be seen in the context of contemporaneous European socialism, rather than subsequent Russian political history. While it certainly



had characteristics peculiar to Russia, and while the triumph in populism of the political and statist principle certainly had an impact on subsequent history, the overlap between populism and anarchism in the 1870s indicates, in my opinion, that both have to be seen as part of a Europe-wide revolutionary movement.

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